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ABSTRACT

Part of a systematic, in-depth assessment of Miami-Dade Community College's (MDCC's) educational programs, student support systems, and selected campus-level activities, this volume of the college's institutional self-study report examines the impact and effectiveness of MDCC's academic policies and curriculum reforms. Introductory material provides a background to the study, a history of general education at MDCC, a discussion of student flow through the educational system, and a description of evaluation methods. The following sections present the results of the evaluation of impact of reforms in three areas: core courses, distribution courses and electives, and student flow. Each section includes an abstract of the self-study, information on the background of the study, descriptive data, information on methodology, results and conclusions, and recommendations and projections. Finally, a summary of the study is presented, indicating that the new general education program at MDCC has found widespread approval from faculty, staff, administrators, students, and the community, and that areas for future investigation and possible modification include grade inflation, unrealistic student expectations, and lack of understanding of core course objectives by students. (HB)

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VOLUME III

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND CURRICULUM REFORMS

MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

JC 850 403

VOLUME III

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND CURRICULUM REFORMS

CORE COURSES

DISTRIBUTION COURSES AND ELECTIVES

STUDENT FLOW

MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

1984 INSTITUTIONAL SELF-STUDY

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The Academic Policies and Curriculum Reform portion of the Miami-Dade Community College's 1984 Institutional Self-Study has involved many students, faculty, administrators, staff, and members of the community. The Committee wishes to acknowledge the significant contributions of those who administered survey instruments, attended meetings, or served as resource persons by participating in informal discussions, interviews, or surveys. Their time and efforts were substantial and their contributions invaluable.

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INTRODUCTION

The three interrelated self-study reports which comprise this volume of the Miami-Dade Community College 1984 Institutional Self-Study evaluate the College's general education core courses, distribution and elective courses, and student flow. These reports were produced by three subcommittees of the Academic Policies and Curriculum Reform Committee, one of eight collegewide committees reporting to the 1984 Self-Study Coordination Committee (SSCC).

Since its 1974 self-study, Miami-Dade Community College has reviewed and revised requirements and offerings in three main areas: (1) entry assessment and basic skills training, (2) general education, and (3) computer-based academic support systems. The General Education Program involves the College's institutionally defined Goals of General Education, implemented in five core courses, distribution courses, and elective courses. Developmental and English as a second language programs and computerized support systems interface with the General Education Program to facilitate the orderly movement of students--or "student flow"--through the educational system. Thus, in its broadest sense, student flow includes recruitment, entry assessment and placement, determination of readiness for general education courses, monitoring of progress toward degree objectives, facilitation of exit from the College, and assistance of student transfer to upper-level institutions, entry to the business world, or other activities.

The Miami-Dade General Education Program and the student flow model are products of nine years of academic involvement in planning, development, and implementation in response to observations and recommendations concerning general education developed by the Miami-Dade 1974 Institutional Self-Study.

The primary purpose of the 1984 self-study was to evaluate the new General Education Program and student flow through the educational system, to help the

College improve its educational effectiveness. Since evaluation of the entire was extremely complex, subcommittees were formed to study the three major parts of the general educational reforms--core courses, distribution/elective courses, and student flow. Because many aspects of student flow are affected by the reforms undertaken by the College in the areas of basic skills and computer-based academic support systems, they are described briefly in this volume. Results of studies of placement and basic skills reforms are found in Volume II; and those of computer-based academic support systems in Volume IV.

BACKGROUND

Recent national trends, both in the economy and in education, have directly affected general education. A brief review of those trends will serve to explain the rationale for the College's reforms in its General Education Program and student flow model.

Changing Economy

Jobs requiring skills in processing information have increased since the 1950s from 17 to 54 percent, while unskilled jobs have decreased from 80 to 20 percent. Therefore, as the President of the College has pointed out, one of the most important goals of the community college in the 1980s is to provide students with the basic academic skills required to find jobs in the new economy of the information age (McCabe, June 1982b, p. 1).

Demand for Broad Backgrounds

A second trend leading to emphasis on basic skills is the business community's desire to hire graduates with broad backgrounds rather than specialized knowledge. An integrated general education curriculum balances the opposing pressures toward professional and disciplinary specialization and toward broad-based, integrative training in higher education (Kolb, in Chickering, 1981, p. 252). Providing students with basic information and skills, regardless of ultimate careers, has become an important goal of general education (Brubaker and Rudy, 1976, p. 274).

Two conflicting theories of curricula--the pluralistic theory of disciplines and the holistic theory of knowledge--are at the heart of the issue concerning the appropriate role of general education core courses and more

specialized discipline courses. According to the pluralistic theory, each discipline has evolved naturally over the years because each has a unique way of defining its area of knowledge and of gathering data in a special symbolic structure not duplicated in any other discipline. To abolish disciplinary lines would be to abolish the underpinnings of education and the best philosophical thought of preceding centuries. On the other hand, the holistic view of knowledge emphasizes the interrelatedness of all learning and requires courses that cut across or connect disciplines. Proponents of this theory believe that undergraduates, above all, must make syntheses, see patterns and systems, understand general theories and ideas, and be able to integrate life with learning (Dressel, 1971, pp. 46-47).

Miami-Dade Community College endorses the latter philosophical view of learning for all degree-seeking students and leaves disciplinary specialization for students who plan to continue their education at an upper-division level. Perhaps "the pendulum swing toward specialization that Charles Eliot began in 1869 with the modest introduction of electives and the concept of a major may have reached its peak in the late 1960s in the course proliferation that came with student demands for relevance and participation in the educational decisions that affected their lives" (Kolb, in Chickering, 1981, p. 251). Whatever the cause, there is, increasingly, a swing away from disciplinary specialization and back to integrated learning and broad backgrounds. For example, a seven-member panel, under the aegis of the National Institute of Education recently stated that "the bachelor's degree has lost its potential to foster the shared values and knowledge that bind us together as a society" (quoted in Scully, 1984, p. 1). A principal result has been the increased importance of "core courses" in the general education curriculum.

Changes in Student Populations

A third trend leading to emphasis on improved basic skills and a tightened student flow model is a changing student body. In the 1960s and early 1970s, as noted above, students in many institutions across the nation gained a greater voice in decisions concerning institutional requirements. One effect was change in admission standards, which in turn brought increased diversity in student populations. Meanwhile, there was a decline in the academic skills of students at every level from kindergarten through college. During the same period, the rapid growth of community colleges, often with an egalitarian orientation and thus an open admissions policy, provided access to new groups of students—minorities, older citizens, and academically underprepared young adults.

A study of changing demographics and their attendant social trends in the 1970s and early 1980s also helps to explain the change in student populations nationwide. The number in the 18 to 24 age range, the most frequent for college attendance, peaked in 1981 (Ostar, 1981, p. 56). The end of the draft, the negative state of the economy, and the lack of faith that having a college degree would ensure a stable job or give its holder more income, decreased college attendance of the 18 to 24 group. In addition, the part of the general population 65 years of age and older was fastest growing while the birthrate declined (Weinstock, 1978, p. 20). Therefore, older adults were targeted for recruitment as future learners. Data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, the National Center for Educational Statistics, and the U.S. Bureau of the Census reveal that more than one third of the post-secondary student body nationally in 1979 was over 25 (Miller, 1979). Miami-Dade followed this national trend, as 35.2% of its Fall 1984 students were in the 25-44 age group (Wright and Mannchen, 1984).

HISTORY OF GENERAL EDUCATION AT MIAMI-DADE

Early General Education Programs

The foregoing national curricular trends have been reflected in the development of general education programs at Miami-Dade discussed below.

Highly directive general education, 1960-63. At its opening in 1960, the College required thirty-six credits in general education and four credits in physical education. These twelve courses in general education, required for all students seeking Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degrees, were similar to those required at the University of Florida and elsewhere. The relevant institutional purposes, as stated in the College's 1960 Catalog, were:

1. To provide a common core of experiences for the student.
2. To provide some insight into the basic areas of knowledge.
3. To assist the student in making a more intelligent decision regarding vocational or avocational pursuits (p. 23).

Twelve hours of communications were required--one basic course in reading, speaking, and writing, followed by three courses correlating readings in the three other basic areas of natural science, humanities, and social science, usually taken as corequisites. The two-semester social science requirement was interdisciplinary. Similarly, the first semester of humanities integrated appreciation and understanding of music, the visual arts, and drama, while the second semester dealt with "key ideas of human culture and consciousness." The required twelve credits in the natural sciences included a general education mathematics course, a course on the general principles of matter and energy, a course in all the biological sciences, and an interdisciplinary earth science course covering astronomy, geology, and meteorology. One of the four required

credits in physical education was basic swimming. Among the remaining twenty-four elective credits, twelve were usually four semesters of a foreign language, often required by American institutions of higher learning for graduation. This left only four courses, or twelve credits, which a student could elect. Even students enrolled in Special Degree Studies, rather than university-parallel programs, were usually required to take a reduced core--six credits of communications and six credits of social science. Some special degree programs loosely related to one of the four basic areas of general education required other core courses.

The 1962-63 academic year saw the introduction of an even more directive approach, with more specific physical education requirements, tighter entrance requirements to college-parallel programs, and stricter placement controls based on prerequisites or particular scores on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, the School and College Ability Test (SCAT), or on the Florida Statewide Twelfth Grade Placement Test. The College's new Guided Studies Program singled out those students with the highest and lowest scores. Those with high scores could take honors independent study courses, while those with low scores were required to take reduced courseloads and remediation.

Movement toward disciplinary specialization, 1963-65. The years 1963-65 saw movement toward greater emphasis on disciplines in various programs, with exemptions from the core courses for those in certain pre-professional programs, exemption from physical education for all those over twenty-one, more latitude in choice for other physical education requirements, and a change from integrated, interdisciplinary courses to the "cafeteria" disciplinary approach to humanities--eight weeks each of music, the visual arts, drama, and philosophy, often with four different instructors. The communications reading courses corequisite with social science, humanities, and natural sciences core

courses became literature.

Disciplinary specialization, 1965-66. In anticipation of accreditation in December 1965, the College's 1965-66 Catalog was superseded by an emergency Bulletin Supplement of August 1965. This clearly reflected the times, for it emphasized the open admissions community college, ungraded classes, fewer required core courses, more emphasis on self-actualization through elective choice, alternative strategies in teaching and gaining credentials, and a greater relationship of coursework to life (as shown in the variance in the number of required credits in general education in technical and pre-professional programs). The core course requirements for the Associate in Arts and Associate in Science programs were reduced from 36 to 24 credits when two semesters of social science and communications were required instead of four. The remaining credits in general education could be in any courses other than physical education or orientation. Moreover, students could take proficiency exams to be exempted from the required general education courses.

Increased disciplinary specialization and elective choice, 1966-76. The years 1966-76 saw quick changes within the above requirements. Choices increased, even for required core courses--especially in the areas of communications and science, which became more disciplinary. Associate in Arts students were allowed to take any two courses from geology, biology, mathematics, or physics to satisfy six credits in the natural sciences. Special exceptions were often made. Associate in Science and Associate in General Studies candidates were required to take six hours of social science only, although individual programs (without uniformity or apparent rationale) often required other general education core courses.

Academic Reaction

By the mid-1970s, the contents of the general education courses at Miami-Dade and student flow through its educational system bore little resemblance to the original program. These and other changes, particularly the massive increase in student enrollment and the proliferation of programs offered at the College, along with general dissatisfaction with the General Education Program structure, suggested need for review.

Miami-Dade's 1974 Institutional Self-Study clearly showed a reaction to emphases on wide elective choice and self-actualization through early specialization. The recommendations concerning general education included in the 1974 self-study were: (1) the appointment of a committee to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the goals, objectives, content, and outcomes of instruction in general education; (2) the establishment of remedial assistance for each general education course; (3) more global involvement of students and faculty in the evaluative process; (4) follow-up studies on recent graduates, who were finding general education more relevant than were enrolled students; and (5) the provision of a clearer, more meaningful rationale for general education, especially in vocational areas (p. 59).

Behind the recommendations were the observations that the curriculum gave evidence of disciplinary fragmentation and the belief that there was a need for a more integrated curriculum:

> It appears that there is little or no effort to synthesize and integrate within and across courses and disciplines in the General Education Program. The general education courses are too often taught as a simplified introduction to a discipline rather than as courses which are part of a program providing a liberal arts foundation (pp. 148-49).

Given its diverse student body, the College faculty and administrators wanted to devise a general education curriculum and a student flow model to provide some educational experiences common to all, but also to consider students' unique needs and the educational needs of the community. The College was open to all members of the community, while emphasizing quality education.

Development and Implementation of the Current General Education Program

In response to the observations and recommendations of the 1974 Institutional Self-Study, in March 1975 a collegewide General Education Study was begun with the appointment of members to the General Education Study Committee, an ad hoc committee of the College Committee on Academic Affairs (CCAA). The General Education Study Committee first planned its study, identified procedures to be used, and selected a director. All further study proceeded from the tenet that the basic purpose of a general education program was to "develop and integrate every student's skills, attitudes, and experiences" (Kelly, 1981, p. 1).

The first phase of the General Education Study began in the fall of 1975. With input from such eminent external consultants as K. Patricia Cross, Benjamin DeMott, and Ashley Montagu, and of Miami-Dade faculty and students in town meetings or forums, the General Education Study Committee developed a preliminary draft called General Education at Miami-Dade Community College: A Draft Document, containing a definition and rationale for general education, the Goals of General Education for Miami-Dade (hereinafter called the Goals), and position statements on several key issues concerning the implementation of general education, including basic skills, career education, and quality in education. The draft document was distributed to all faculty for review and recommendations. Progress reports were given regularly to the CCAA and to

campus administrative councils.

In the second phase of the study, 1976-1977, the General Education Study Committee reviewed faculty reactions to the draft document and revised the Goals. The committee suggested the establishment of four general education campus task forces to recommend general education requirements for Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, and Associate in General Studies degrees; to review the recommended Goals to determine which were the proper concern of the faculty and which the concern of particular campus areas; to recommend a curriculum by which students could attain the Goals in required, limited-choice courses, and open-choice courses (or other educational units); to determine areas for curricular development; and to devise organizational patterns and administrative procedures for student flow through the program. The proposed General Education Program had to meet state requirements of thirty-six credits in transfer programs, address all of the Goals, define instructional units in performance or competency terms, and draw primarily upon available resources. The program also had to be structured to allow students to move from one general education course to another and from one campus to another without penalty or serious difficulty.

A Summary of the Draft Document was next prepared and distributed, along with the revised general education Goals and a summary of faculty responses to the draft document. The Goals, as seen in Figure 1, reproduced from Lukenbill and McCabe (1978, pp. 35-37), cover six basic areas of learning.

Figure 1. The Goals of General Education

I. Fundamental Skills

1. The students will be able to speak, listen, write, and read competently and in an organized and critical manner.

2. The students will be able to communicate effectively with individuals in the different aspects of their lives.

3. The students will be able to carry out computations necessary to producers and consumers in society.

4. The students will be able to use systematic, critical, and creative processes, drawing from knowledge of appropriate disciplines, to identify problems, analyze alternative solutions, and make decisions.

II. The Individual

5. The students, based on their knowledge of themselves, will develop capability for self-direction.

6. The students will know the major aspects of the biological, psychological, and social natures of man.

7 The students will be able to do what is necessary to develop and maintain their physical and mental health.

8. The students will develop the capability for making worthwhile use of their leisure or discretionary time.

9. The students will assess the impact of prejudices on their attitudes and behaviors.

10. The students will develop appreciation for and find value in participating in aesthetic and creative activities; they will have knowledge of the major areas of human self-expression, especially as related to the reflection of the human spirit in aesthetic forms and humanistic ideas.

III. The Individual's Goals for the Future

11. The students will analyze and assess their personal values and their life goals in order to integrate them with their decision-making.

12. The students will investigate career choices that are compatible with their abilities, interests, and opportunities.

13. The students will set educational objectives in view of their tentative or definite career choices and non-career pursuits.

14. The students will be aware of their responsibility for continued learning throughout their lives.

IV. The Individual's Relationships with Other Persons and Groups

15. The students will know the characteristics of effective interpersonal relationships and will assess their interpersonal skills.

16. The students will apply principles of interpersonal skills in order to make their own human relationships, especially in the family or another primary group, more mutually satisfying.

17. The students will analyze how groups function, within and apart from organizational structures, and will assess their own skills in working with groups.

18. The students will know characteristics of the cultures of other ethnic and racial groups, and will assess their own ability to establish positive relationships with individuals who have different ethnic and racial identities.

V. Society and the Individual

19. The students will know and appreciate major accomplishments of various cultures and will evaluate their impact on contemporary society.

20. The students will know significant philosophies and life styles which societies and individuals have adopted and will assess their relevance to themselves and to society.

21. The students will know major ideas and events which have shaped United States society as compared and contrasted with other societies.

22. The students will know the organization and functioning of the United States society and will apply their knowledge of social principles as enlightened individuals.

VI. Natural Phenomena and the Individual

23. The students will know the basic components, structures, and functioning of natural phenomena.

24. The students will have knowledge of the philosophy of science and of principles that are basic to scientific inquiry and research.

25. The students will analyze human interaction with the natural environment, will assess the quality of their local environment, and will assume responsibility for their personal impact on the environment.

26. The students will be sensitive to the effects of technology upon the individual, society, and the natural environment.

Each campus at this point established a general education task force to develop specific recommendations concerning how to implement these general education Goals. The Medical Center and New World Campuses had steering committees, North Campus a large committee (40 members) and a Committee on Detail (5 members), and South Campus involved every faculty member, with chairs of large subcommittees also comprising a Steering Committee. All committees sought to involve as many faculty as possible. Input was also obtained from students and the community. Each campus prepared its own proposal. The General Education Study Committee then reviewed the four campus proposals, held more open meetings, met with departments and divisions which had expressed particular concerns, and sponsored a workshop on competency education.

In the third phase of the study, 1977-78, the General Education Study Committee met in extended sessions to prepare the General Education Proposal. After distribution of the proposal to all faculty, more than thirty meetings were held on the campuses to explain it, to hear concerns of faculty, and to solicit reactions and suggestions. Similar meetings were also held with students. Approximately seventy responses were received from individuals, small faculty groups, departments, divisions, areas, and campuses. Over one hundred specific recommendations were summarized from these reactions, and the General Education Study Committee voted separately on each. Then the committee submitted a revised final proposal, along with rationale statements and other documents, to the CCAA. The final proposal was also sent for comment to educational consultants outside the College, and to articulation officers at the state universities, Florida International University, the Dade County public schools, and advisory committees of occupational programs The proposal was approved by the CCAA, the President's Council, and the Board of Trustees.

The final document, published as General Education in a Changing Society

(Lukenbill and McCabe, 1978), envisioned five core courses of three credits each—Communications, Humanities, The Natural Environment (later called Energy in The Natural Environment), The Social Environment, and The Individual (later called the Individual in Transition). It also described the three-tiered approach to general education—core courses, distribution courses, and elective courses—and advocated collegewide standards for entry assessment and placement, computer-based support systems in basic academic skills, and monitoring of student flow with standards of academic progress and advisement reporting.

Core course development teams. The first step in core course development was to determine what competencies students completing the core would be expected to have. To achieve this, in Winter 1979 (1978-2) five eight-member development teams were selected. Each team had collegewide representation, drawn from faculty who would teach the respective course or faculty and administrators with expertise in the field, plus one representative from the occupational areas. The Steering Committee, composed of the five team chairpersons, two representatives from the Faculty Senate, and the Director of the Study, identified tasks for the development teams and planned a schedule for Winter 1980 (1979-2) to obtain suggestions about course content, to assess content priorities, to draft course objectives or competencies, and to establish evaluation criteria.

Faculty reviewed the objectives and the development teams revised the objectives and evaluation criteria in four drafts. There were two distinct review processes: (1) a review committee comprised of representative interest groups (Equal Access/Equal Opportunity, the handicapped, interdisciplinary programs, counselors/advisors, outreach programs, international student programs, mature student centers, libraries, and Open College); and (2) individual reviews by vice presidents, deans, appropriate associate deans,

directors, and chairpersons, and by faculty in appropriate departments. Students were also permitted to attend these meetings and observe the review process. Campus resource developers assisted the Steering Committee and the five development teams.

Development of teaching strategies, materials and resources. The second step in implementation of core course development was the design of instructional strategies, especially to assist in individualizing of instruction, making allowance for needs of particular student populations, and encouraging growth in basic academic skills. A variety of teaching materials, such as faculty resource handbooks, was developed, both for full- and part-time faculty. Support materials were also designed and gathered to assist students having difficulty in meeting course objectives.

Faculty and staff development. Parallel to core course development and implementation was faculty and staff development. Funds were provided to train faculty likely to be teaching the Humanities, Social Environment, Natural Environment, and Individual core courses. Seminars were conducted to introduce methods of individualizing instruction and to help faculty anticipate problems associated with students having basic academic skills deficiencies, classes having students with a wide range of abilities, and needs of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Faculty audited one another's classes or team-taught to become familiar with disciplines other than their own.

Since the Communications course incorporated much of the existing core course material, it proceeded independently of the core course development schedule set by the Steering Committee, and communications faculty did not participate in faculty development. Instead, efforts were made to encourage writing across the curriculum and to determine entry and exit levels for Communications. Workshops were offered to introduce approaches to teaching

reading, speaking, and listening competencies. Campuses also ran workshops to orient part-time faculty to the differences between old and new courses so that the transition would be smooth. Faculty trained in seminars offered limited sections of new core courses in Fall 1981 (1981-1). The old general education courses to be replaced by core courses were phased out in Winter 1982 (1981-2).

The Communications core course included reading, writing, speaking, and listening communications skills; it was changed in Fall 1984 (1984-1) to English Composition I, with the sequential distribution course named English Composition II. The Humanities core course surveys the nature and purpose of the humanities, the similarities and differences in the major arts areas, and the basic knowledge needed to understand and appreciate the humanities. The Social Environment emphasizes the process of socialization and basic principles of political and economic systems. Energy in the Natural Environment draws upon all the sciences to provide a comprehensive understanding of the nature, forms, and functions of energy in the world, and the implications of energy use and technology for society and the individual. The Individual in Transition explores the factors that influence individual development throughout life and analyzes those characteristics and conditions that affect psychological and physical health. The five required core courses are evaluated in the first of this volume's studies.

Development of distribution courses list. As the second tier of the General Education Program, the distribution courses were an essential part of the College's reform package. The criteria for distribution courses were given in General Education in a Changing Society (Lukenbill and McCabe, 1978, p. 70) as follows:

1. Each course should address General Education Goals associated with the content area.

2. The course should emphasize values, broad principles, approaches to acquiring knowledge, problem solving, major themes, and important issues appropriate to the discipline(s) under study.

3. The course should illustrate relationships with other disciplines in the area in achieving the General Education Goals.

4. The course should not be one designed exclusively as a preparation for a major area of study or for a particular career.

The goals of the distribution courses were to provide instruction that is more advanced than that provided in the five core courses but still directly involved in fostering the general education Goals. In fact, distribution courses share many of the characteristics of the core courses and are, as noted above, not intended to be either preparation for a major area of study or courses exclusively directed toward a specific career. Instead, they are survey courses designed to introduce students to many facets of a discipline. By helping students accumulate the basic knowledge and explore the modes of study characteristic of particular disciplines, distribution courses not only should help students decide what course of study they wish to pursue in greater depth but also should produce students informed about the diverse ways of acquiring knowledge. The idea has been to avoid premature specialization while providing diversity with direction, rather than aimless credit-gathering. In this way, students should be assured of having a broad body of common knowledge to draw upon as they enter specialized areas of studies. The general problem-solving techniques they learn, and the insights in evaluation of evidence, should increase their chances of success in their areas of interest. Consequently, they should be able to make connections among disciplines and increase the usefulness of what they learn for their private lives, not just their professional pursuits, because they will have been introduced to a variety of basic academic areas, at two levels of specificity.

Drafts of recommendations for prescribed courses, distribution courses, and elective courses were submitted to the General Education Study Committee by the four general education campus committees. These recommendations were reviewed, evaluated, revised, and sent to the CCAA for approval. At the June 24, 1980 meeting of the CCAA, a proposal was made to have one collegewide list of distribution courses to eliminate the problem of student "shopping" from campus to campus for particular courses, and to avoid the confusion which would result from a course offered at one campus not counting toward the distribution requirement at another. One collegewide list, it was suggested, would also simplify advisement of students, record-keeping, and programming of the computerized Advisement and Graduation Information System (AGIS) being developed to provide students with information on their academic progress toward completion of their program objectives.

The President's Council subsequently approved the idea of one collegewide list for distribution courses. For most students the distribution course for Communications was English Composition (Creative Writing or literature courses were allowed substitutes with special permission). There was no districtwide group for the Individual core course, because it covered several academic areas. Therefore collegewide committees were established for the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences to recommend courses for each group. One representative from the occupational/technical areas sat on each committee, which used the original recommendations made by each campus as working documents. The first draft of the committees' course recommendations was distributed to all faculty and administrators in March 1981.

In addition, as part of the general education reforms, students were given more guidance and structure in the selection and sequencing of courses. One impact was the requirement that distribution courses be taken only after

students had taken the appropriate core course. To enforce this requirement, computer "locks" were established to prevent students who self-advised from defeating the intent of the program. If students registered out of sequence, the computer rejected the suggested course and voided the registration. During the 1984 Fall Term, however, the collegewide Academic Affairs Committee (formerly CCAA) voted to allow students to enroll in distribution courses concurrently with corresponding core courses.

The present list of distribution courses contains many further additions and deletions from the original list, as this portion of the General Education Program is highly dynamic. Mathematics, English Composition II, and a third composition class, Advanced Composition, became requirements in Fall 1984 (1984-1). The current approved collegewide distribution list, shown in Figure 2, is comprised of 33 courses and all foreign language courses at or above the 2000 level. These and the third-tier elective courses are evaluated in the second of this volume's studies.

Figure 2

Current Approved Collegewide Distribution Courses List

Communications Distribution Group (both required)

1. English Composition (ENC 1102)
2. Advanced Composition (ENC 2301)

Social Sciences Distribution Group

1. History of the United States Since 1877 (AMH 2020)
2. Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (ANT 2410)
3. Human Growth and Development (DEP 2000)
4. Principles of Economics (ECO 2013)
5. American Federal Government (POS 2041)
6. Introduction to Psychology (PSY 2012)
7. Introduction to Sociology (SOC 2000)
8. History of World Civilization from 1715 to Contemporary Time (WOH 2022)

Natural Sciences Distribution Group

1. General Education Biology (APB 1150)
2. Descriptive Astronomy (AST 1002)
*3. Basic Chemistry (CHM 1034)
*4. General Chemistry (CHM 1045)
*5. General Chemistry and Qualitative Analysis Laboratory (CHM 1050)
6. Survey of General Chemistry (CHM 2030)
7. General Education Earth Science (GLY 1000)
8. Ecology of the National Parks (GLY 1310)
9. Essentials of Nutrition (HUN 1201)
10. Introduction to Weather (MET 1010)
11. Introduction to Oceanography (OCE 1001)
12. General Education Physical Science (PSC 1121)
*13. Physics with Calculus (PHY 2040)
*14. Physics (PHY 2053)

Humanities Distribution Group

1. Art Appreciation (ARH 1000)
2. A Survey of World Literature 18th century to present (LIT 2120)
3. Music Appreciation (MUL 1011)
4. Introduction to Philosophy (PHI 2010)
5. Introduction to Drama (THE 2000)
6. Foreign language courses above the 2000 level

Mathematics Distribution Group (one course or higher-level course required)

1. College Algebra (MAC 1102)
2. Mathematics I for Elementary Education Majors (MAE 2810)
3. General College Mathematics (MGF 1113)
4. Statistical Methods (STA 2014).

*Courses added as a compromise to accomodate science and health area program students with extensive science requirements.

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EVOLUTION OF A STUDENT FLOW MODEL

Parallel to development of core courses and a collegewide distribution course list was the evolution of a student flow model. The purpose of this model was to provide an overall, more directive approach to the entire educational process at Miami-Dade from entry to graduation. As characterized by the College's then Vice President for Education, "The student flow model demonstrates the capability of technological subsystems to support a comprehensive program of General Education" (Kelly, 1981, p.3). Computer support systems ideally (1) assess and place students in programs corresponding to their abilities, (2) monitor, advise, and prescribe to students according to their progress through the system, and (3) certify students' graduation based on their meeting all degree objectives and passing the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST). This systems approach to education allows Miami-Dade, as an open admissions college, to maintain appropriate standards in general education courses while providing necessary basic academic skills instruction, and to impose reasonable expectatons for academic performance while stressing individualized approaches to student learning and maximizing student progress.

Entry Assessment and Placement

Miami-Dade is among those institutions with extensive experience in entry-level assessment and placement (Losak and Kelly, 1984). From 1960-75, scores on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, the School and College Ability Test (SCAT), and the Florida Statewide Twelfth Grade Placement Test were used to place students in specific courses and programs, including honors and developmental. However, in 1975, just after the College's last self-study took place, the state discontinued the statewide twelfth grade placement test, and different campuses at Miami-Dade had begun to have different policies concerning

placement testing and its application. Miami-Dade continued to use the Nelson-Denny Reading Test and the SCAT until 1978.

In response to the observations and recommendations concerning general education in the 1974 self-study, previously listed, a collegewide committee was appointed in 1978 to develop a system of basic skills assessment. This committee asked individual departments on each campus to identify and set competencies for entry and exit skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. Further, the committee reviewed assessment instruments to determine which best addressed the recommended competencies. After much debate and discussion, the College adopted, beginning in Spring 1978 (1977-3), the Comparative Guidance and Placement Program (CGP) tests. The committee recommended and the College adopted mandatory testing for students carrying nine credits, students enrolling in English or mathematics courses, and students having completed fifteen credits. Computer "locks" based on cutoff scores were to restrict enrollment in English, mathematics, or science courses.

Between 1980 and 1984, the CGP was administered to all first-time-in-college degree-seeking students--not as a condition for admission but as an assessment and placement instrument. Use of the CGP has included four subtests--reading, objective writing, computation skills, and elementary algebra (optional). If test results revealed weaknesses in any of the basic academic skills areas, students were required to take developmental coursework and were restricted in other coursework and courseload.

The State of Florida has now instituted a statewide assessment program, which began in January 1985. Entering students must present assessment scores from the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the American College Test (ACT), the Assessment of Skills for Successful Entry and Transfer (ASSET), or Multiple Assessment and Performance Services (MAPS). Scores of 840 on the SAT and 17 on ACT exempt students from taking ASSET or MAPS.

In addition, international students and other students whose native language is not English are assessed by the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the English Placement Test (EPT), and placed in either English as a second language (ESL) or general education courses as appropriate. Cutoff and placement scores may vary from campus to campus. Students placed in ESL courses are required to take MAPS after completing the fourth level in the ESL Program to determine whether they need developmental work or can proceed to the General Education Program.

A way of checking the exit from developmental courses was to change grading from an A-F system to S, P, U grading criteria. In this context, U means "Unsatisfactory"; P means "Progress" and students must repeat the course; and S means "Satisfactory," the only grade that permits students to begin the general education core requirements. In addition, instructors receive a list with names of students who have completed developmental courses. Further, computer "locks" ideally (but not always) prevent students who have not completed developmental work from enrolling in the General Education Program. On some campuses, six-credit classes provide a combined intensive writing laboratory and Communications core course, and thus serve as a bridge from developmental and ESL programs for those students nearly ready for the General Education Program.

A more detailed description of student flow in developmental and ESL programs is found in Volume II, Prescriptive Education.

Progress Through the System

As they move through the educational process, students are monitored and advised by three computerized academic support systems, described briefly below. More detailed descriptions and evaluations of these systems are located in Volume IV, Student Information and Performance Studies.

Standards of Academic Progress. Envisioned in General Education in a

Changing Society (Lukenbill and McCabe, 1978) and instituted with the General Education Program, the Standards of Academic Progress (SOAP) are a major component of student flow. From the point at which seven credits have been completed, this program monitors student progress and provides a system of four classifications: warning, probation, suspension, and, finally, dismissal from the institution, as a result of low grade point averages or excessive withdrawals from classes. The standards are not intended to discourage or penalize students who are sincerely trying to achieve their educational goals. Instead, the objective of SOAP is to guide and monitor student performance and to offer support. The efficacy and value of SOAP rests on a system of early detection of academic weaknesses so that corrective measures can be applied.

Academic Alert. Since SOAP is used to certify student progress based on credits and grades earned, it was logical "to alert the students about impending problems and help them correct the situation" (Anandam, May 1981, p. 1). The result was the development of the Academic Alert and Advisement System. Starting with 9,706 entering students in Fall 1978 (1978-1), the system was quickly expanded to include all students beginning in Fall 1980 (1980-1). The College requires all faculty to rate students' academic progress and attendance during fall and winter terms. Students subsequently receive an individualized letter through a computer system called Response System with Variable Prescription (RSVP). The letter reports faculty ratings, offers suggestions for improvement, and encourages successful completion of the term. Results from a telephone survey of 398 students indicated that 93% of students receiving Academic Alert letters felt that these letters were helpful and should continue, and revealed that students improved performance, increased grade point averages and completion rates, and lowered suspension rates when they were informed early of deficiencies and when they availed themselves of special assistance which the College offered (Anandam, May 1981, p. 2).

Advisement and Graduation Information System. The third computerized academic support component important to student flow is the Advisement and Graduation Information System (AGIS), also developed during the same period that the General Education Program was introduced. AGIS represents an impressive step in providing individualized advisement to students. Through AGIS, students have a dependable source of information about their progress toward meeting degree requirements. AGIS realigns student transcripts according to requirement areas rather than by terms. Students are informed of the progress they are making toward completing the requirements of a specific program of study and are notified of those requirements which they still need to meet. The system also checks for graduation certification by identifying courses completed and those in which the student is currently enrolled, by certifying eligibility to take the CLAST, and by notifying students of their CLAST results.

In addition, AGIS generates outlines of suggested courses by program major, and offers information on requirements of specified senior institutions for that major. Students receive a listing of transfer courses suggested for their declared majors in nine state universities and four private colleges in Florida. The object of generating and making available this pertinent information to students is to allow them to compare requirements among universities and to note how they are proceeding in meeting the requirements for transfer to upper-division colleges and universities in Florida.

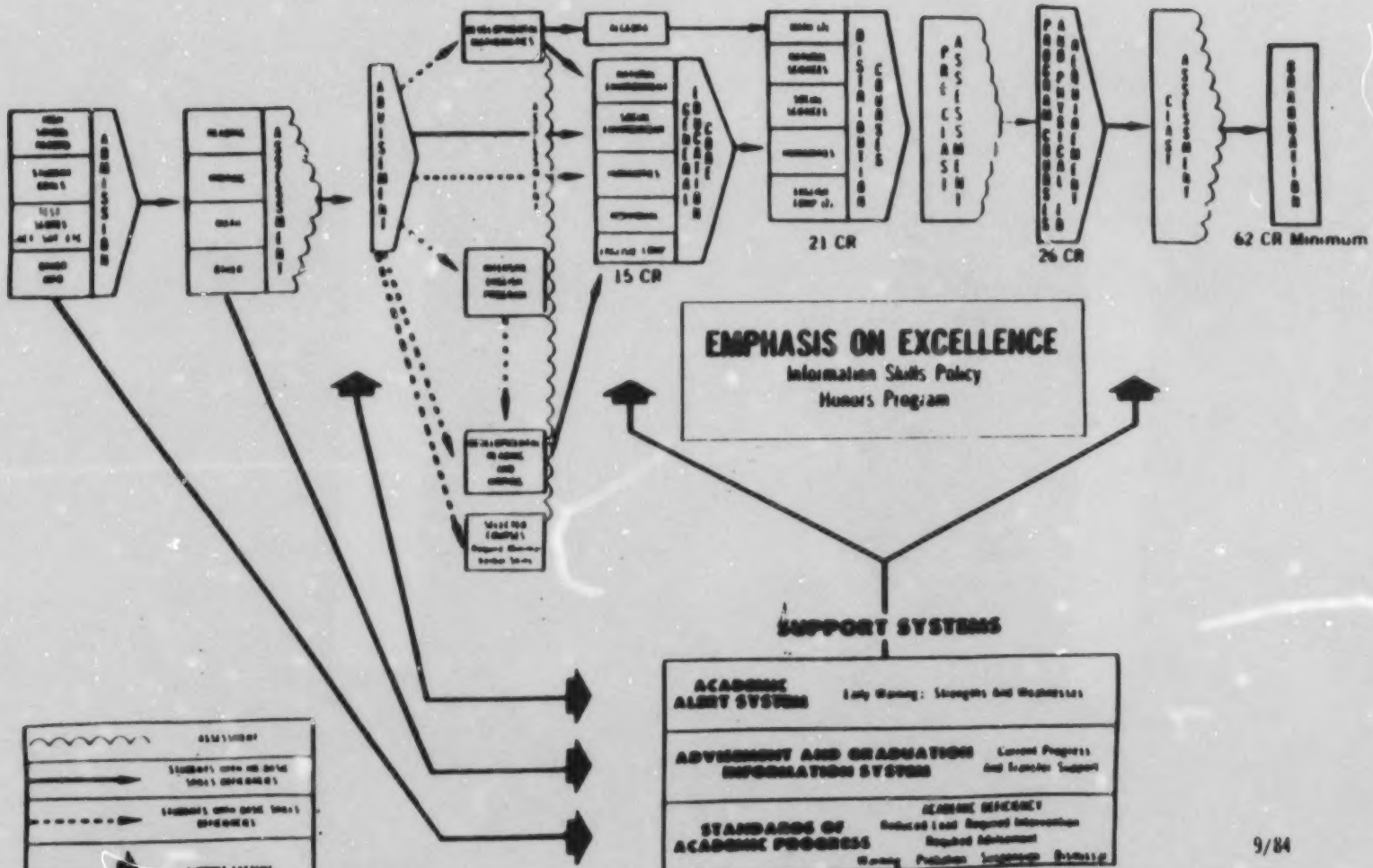
As a result of AGIS, students' academic records are constantly matched against graduation requirements. As changes in student records occur (e.g., courses completed, new registration, grade changes, or results on CLAST), an updated AGIS report is produced. This system in no way replaces the professional advisor and counselor; however, it saves hours of tedious paperwork.

In summary, the College's ideal student flow model (see Figure 3) directs

students through the educational system from entry to graduation in an orderly way and gives them enough feedback to progress, to follow specific prescriptions for remediation, or to leave college for more appropriate activity.

Figure 3

ASSOCIATE IN ARTS STUDENT FLOW MODEL



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MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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EVALUATION METHODS

Each of the three subcommittees of the self-study's Academic Policies and Curriculum Reform Committee—Core Courses, Distribution Courses, and Student Flow—outlined and pursued its study goals with relative independence. However, there were some shared methods and processes, which included the following:

(1) Each subcommittee had access to two preliminary open-ended surveys on issues of concern conducted by the Self-Study Coordination Committee (SSCC). One survey was directed to faculty, administrators, and classified staff; the other, to students.

(2) Each subcommittee was supplied with, directed toward, and given access to, internally produced documents, data, and other educational literature appropriate to its charge.

(3) Each subcommitee was staffed with personnel with expressed interest in, and wide experience with, the General Education Program and its evolution at Miami-Dade.

(4) Each subcommittee had a contact person in the Office of Institutional Research to assist in acquisition of data and formulation of new data-gathering instruments.

(5) Each subcommittee had access to data from eight community surveys administered by the SSCC and described in Volume I.

(6) Each subcommittee formulated issues for investigation, study goals, and questions.

(7) Each subcommittee used data from original surveys of their own construction.

(8) Each subcommittee chose research methods and processes after extensive meetings and informal discussions with faculty and administrators.

(9) Each subcommittee's work was thoroughly reviewed by the study editor, the study director, and appropriate College administrators.

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND CURRICULUM REFORMS

PART 1

CORE COURSES

MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

1984 INSTITUTIONAL SELF-STUDY

ABSTRACT

This core courses self-study report presents results of an evaluative investigation by the Core Courses Subcommittee of the Academic Policies and Curriculum Reform Committee. The study was primarily devoted to measuring the attitudes of Miami-Dade Community College staff and administrators, faculty, students, and representatives from the community toward the institutionally-defined general education goals, the five required core courses of the College's current General Education Program, and the educational directions taken by the College toward more directive control over the general education curriculum and increased emphasis on quality education. The study also assessed the extent to which staff and administrators, faculty, and students were familiar with the College's competency-based education model, on which the core courses are based, and with the College's entire systems approach to education. The competency-based education model includes the institutional goals, translated into core course goals and objectives and implemented through various teaching strategies, materials, and resources. The systems approach to general education currently used by the College includes both developmental and English as a second language (ESL) programs and computer systems support. Further, the study described the extent to which the new General Education Program addressed the observations and recommendations concerning general education made in the Miami-Dade 1974 Institutional Self-Study final report.

The study subcommittee included campus faculty and staff with expressed interests, wide backgrounds, and extensive experience in general education, supported by College administrators and resource persons from appropriate areas.

Investigatory data sources included responses by faculty and students to a preliminary survey, informal dialog with colleagues, and questions generated from review and analysis of pertinent planning documents, previous study reports, and educational articles. Primary data sources included three major surveys, using single-alternative responses, checklists, simple fill-in items, and open-ended fill-in items. Valid responses were received from 515 students, 60 core course instructors, and 112 general faculty and administrators. Pertinent results from other surveys of College staff and administrators, 207 recent Miami-Dade graduates, 1,075 College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) examinees, and 474 representatives from selected community groups were also utilized. A large number of comparisons were made across the data base and among subgroups.

The study's findings indicated strong approval for the five required general education core courses in their current forms, strong support for both the College's competency-based education model and the systems approach to general education, and wide approval for the educational directions that the College has taken toward more directive control over the general education curriculum and greater emphasis on quality education. The core courses study also pointed out how the General Education Program addressed the relevant recommendations of the 1974 self-study by (1) making the rationale of general education more understandable to students; (2) creating core courses which were more relevant, integrative, and interdisciplinary than those investigated in 1974; and (3) involving faculty and students in a nine-year general education reform process.

To maintain and further develop a coherent General Education Program at the College, responsive and accountable to students, faculty, staff,

administrators, and the community, a number of specific areas for review, evaluation, and possible action were identified. The study's principal recommendations address (1) increasing the awareness of appropriate populations of pertinent information, programs, and systems; (2) reviewing, evaluating, and possibly revising core course objectives and General Education Program requirements; and (3) increasing the extent of directive control over the general education curriculum, thereby emphasizing, and hopefully continuing to improve, the quality of general education at Miami-Dade.

BACKGROUND

The current General Education Program at Miami-Dade Community College is the culmination of the collegewide General Education Study (conducted in 1975-78); a development and implementation phase (pursued in 1979-81); and a three-year period (1982-85) devoted to establishing and working with the five required general education core courses, determining appropriate general education distribution and elective courses, and monitoring efficient student flow, through the General Education Program, to graduation. The evolution of the General Education Program is described in greater detail in the Volume III Introduction.

No in-depth collegewide evaluation of the College's General Education Program had yet been made, and the primary purpose of the 1984 Institutional Self-Study was to improve the educational effectiveness of Miami-Dade Community College and appraise the General Education Program's perceived effectiveness. Therefore, the 1984 self-study was considered a timely and advantageous opportunity to determine and assess the reactions to the program from the total academic community.

The 1984 Self-Study Coordination Committee considered evaluation of the General Education Program overly complex for a single committee. Three major aspects of the General Education Program--core courses, distribution and elective courses, and student flow--were therefore selected as separate topics for individual subcommittee study and evaluation. Since the five required general education core courses comprise approximately 25% of credit hours required of all degree-seeking students, and are an educational experience common to all, they may be regarded as the heart of the College's educational reforms.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CORE COURSES

Each core course in the Miami-Dade General Education Program curriculum has measurable course competencies or objectives. Moreover, each core course has been designed to be interdisciplinary and integrative with the other four. Each is student-involving through the syntheses of past knowledge and experience with experiential learning and its application. The affective sphere is addressed in each, especially in the examination of values formation.

Instructors interrelate the five core courses by emphasizing such common goals as improving fundamental skills, increasing life satisfaction, and forming a commitment to lifelong learning. However, the Communications course specifically deals with reading, writing, listening, speaking, and communications theory. The Humanities course includes the essential character and value of the humanities, information needed to comprehend and appreciate the humanities, and a comparison and contrast of basic areas in the arts. The Social Environment course centers around socialization, emphasizing political and economic systems. Energy in the Natural Environment is an interdisciplinary course on types and uses of energy, treating the current technology and uses that energy imply for both the world and the individual. The Individual in Transition course covers individual development, emphasizing physical and psychological factors.

All students take these five core courses or are exempted based on demonstrated proficiency in course competencies by College-approved methods of acceleration.

HOW THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

Makeup of Subcommittee

To formulate objectives and identify research issues and questions of maximum pertinence, the Core Courses Subcommittee was comprised of members with expressed interests, wide experience, and extensive backgrounds in general education. The subcommittee had representatives from each of the four campuses. Because of their experience and diversity, the group felt especially attuned to campus views and attitudes concerning the new General Education Program.

Planning Phase

Once the collegewide Core Courses Subcommittee was appointed, it met to determine subcommittee study objectives, identify the most efficient and expeditious methods for pursuing these objectives, conduct the study, interpret the data, develop recommendations, and work with the subcommittee writer to prepare the present report.

To identify research issues, the subcommittee first used informal discussions with colleagues and a preliminary survey distributed to faculty and students to generate questions related to core courses and their objectives. These questions are located in the separate report annex.

The subcommittee also divided into three groups to review (1) each core course's objectives and course handouts; (2) the institutionally-defined general education goals, College policies, and mission statements; and (3) the recommendations and observations concerning general education contained in the Miami-Dade 1974 Institutional Self-Study final report. Each examination generated new research topics and questions to be added to those already generated.

Examination of core course objectives and institutional goals. Examination of core course objectives and handouts revealed the importance of student attitudes and perceptions. Study questions generated from this examination are located in the separate report annex. The subcommittee also formulated questions, further specified in the separate report annex, relating directly to the College's general education goals. The subcommittee decided that a major aspect of the evaluation of core courses had to involve the institutionally defined Goals of General Education (hereafter referred to as Goals) contained in General Education in a Changing Society (Lukenbill and McCabe, 1978, pp. 35-37), since historically these Goals had generated the core courses and continue to reflect the College's aspirations for its General Education Program. (These Goals are listed as Figure 1 in the Volume III Introduction, where a more detailed account of the relationship between the Goals and the General Education Program is also found.)

Examination of the 1974 Self-Study. More questions and subjects, further specified in the separate report annex, were added to the investigatory plan when the Core Courses Subcommittee examined the 1974 Institutional Self-Study final report and found four important recommendations under the subheading of "General Education" (p. 59). These were:

> Recommendation 1: The College as well as each campus should set up a comprehensive evaluation of the outcomes of instruction in general education, and should establish a comprehensive, in-depth follow-up of the progress, responses, and suggestions of the graduates of the College.
>
> Recommendation 2: Some formal method of remedial assistance should be established for each general education course.
>
> Recommendation 3: The goals, objectives, and content of each general education course, together with the reactions of students to the courses, should be thoroughly evaluated by the administrators responsible, with a view to restructuring content and presentation where the evaluations deem it necessary.

Recommendation 4: Every effort should be made to make the rationale for general education courses clear and meaningful to faculty and students alike.

Investigatory items were added which asked to what extent faculty and administrators felt that the College had evaluated the Goals, the General Education Program, and the core courses in a systematic way (Recommendation 1 above) and provided remedial assistance (Recommendation 2), and to what degree administrators had already reviewed and revised these courses (Recommendation 3). After consultation with the District Dean of Adademic Affairs, the subcommittee concluded that Recommendation 4 had been adequately addressed by the institution. Prior to the implementation of the new General Education Program, involved faculty participated in workshops that provided extensive exploration not only of the rationale for general education courses but also of the ways in which specific general education objectives addressed that rationale.

The subcommittee further decided to include, in its survey instruments, items concerning the extent to which instructional personnel were able to transmit this rationale to students. As another means of determining compliance with general education Recommendations 1-3, a memorandum was sent to the appropriate deans at each campus, and to the District Dean of Academic Affairs, inquiring about the extent to which, and the means by which, each campus recommendation had been pursued.

The Core Courses Subcommittee also addressed Recommendation 4 of the 1974 Institutional Self-Study under the category "Occupational Education," which stated that "No additional courses in general education should be included in the allied health program" (p. 60). The Dean of Nursing Education for the Medical Center Campus requested that the humanities requirement be dropped and

the allied health program" (p. 60). The Dean of Nursing Education for the Medical Center Campus requested that the humanities requirement be dropped and English Composition (ENC 1102), the distribution course required after the Communications core course, added in its stead, and that taking Nursing 2538, with its accompanying laboratory, and Developmental Psychology (PSY 2000) exempt students from the Individual in Transition core course, substituting instead Introduction to Psychology (PSY 2012). This request was thoroughly discussed and reviewed, with the help of core course faculty also familiar with the nursing program.

The last recommendation from the 1974 Institutional Self-Study pertinent to the subcommittee was Recommendation 12 under the heading "Quality of Instructional Environment," which read:

> Campus committees should be established to study the current maximum enrollments in the general education courses, specialized second-year courses, and classes in special programs, for the purpose of determining instructional effectiveness and necessary modifications or changes in the present courses or programs (p. 84).

There had been extensive discussion and review on departmental, divisional, and institutional levels of existing educational research relating to class size and performance, particularly in basic skills courses. In fact, Miami-Dade reduced ideal class size in Communications to 2. effective Fall 1983, and used some of its appropriation under Item #470, Special Categories, College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST)/"Gordon Rule" Impact, of the General Appropriations Act of 1984, and following guidelines approved by the State Board of Community Colleges on July 13, 1984, to reduce average class size in English (including the Communications core course) to come closer to the state-determined goal of an average class size of 22. The impact of this process shall be evaluated

after its complete implementation.

Examination of other background documents, records, and data. Other documents and materials used by the study subcommittee included the College's 1979 Fifth-Year Report to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools ; extensive memoranda and minutes from the office of the Director of the General Education Study; and educational articles and books, including materials written by the President of the the College and by its then Vice President for Education.

Sources of New Data

The new data received and generated by the study subcommittee were of three types: (1) investigatory, (2) primary, and (3) encapsulated (i.e., contained in surveys of larger scope).

Investigatory data. During April 1984, the subcommittee received copies of results from open-ended surveys conducted by the collegewide Self-Study Coordination Committee. These surveys had been distributed to selected faculty members and students to elicit their suggestions on questions and issues to be investigated in the three major areas of curriculum reform. The questionnaire sent to appropriate deans on each campus and to the District Dean of Academic Affairs drew responses from the Mitchell Wolfson New World Center Campus and from the North Campus.

Primary data. Three original survey instruments using alternative responses, checklists, and fill-in items were generated by the study subcommittee from the investigatory data. Items on the student survey instrument related to demographic characteristics, the relationships between taking core courses and attaining the Goals of General Education, evaluations of individual core courses, information on core course completion, attitudes toward

the General Education Program, and data on the relationship between developmental courses and core courses. The survey instrument for core course instructors identified the course in which the survey was administered, asked specific questions about core course objectives and the Goals of General Education, and assessed attitudes toward developmental courses and core course assignments. A third survey instrument was distributed to general faculty and administrators. In addition to demographic data, this survey solicited attitudes toward the Goals of General Education, the administration of the General Education Program, specific core course modifications, 1974 self-study recommendations, and changes in core requirements. (Copies and more detailed analyses of these survey instruments are found in the separate report annex.)

Encapsulated data. The subcommittee was also able to use encapsulated items from more general surveys, including a collegewide staff and adminstrators survey and eight community surveys administered by the Self-Study Coordination Committee. More directive addenda were also given to College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) examinees, to 1982-84 College graduates, and to several other groups. These survey instruments are described in detail in Volume I.

The subcommittee had contributed suggestions and items to these community surveys. On the standard 23-item version (the item numbers vary according to the instrument used), relevant items concerned the Goals of General Education.

One item requested responses to ten paraphrased or inferred Goal statements as "very important," "important," or "not important." Another item asked for the top three goals, and a third invited additions to the list of goals named. These three items on the community surveys appeared variously as items on the CLAST questionnaire, the General Public Survey, and the Joint Collegewide Staff and Administrators Survey.

Data Collection

Target Groups. The following general target groups were used by the Core Courses Subcommittee: students, core course instructors, general faculty and adminstrators, and members of the community. In order to increase the reliability of data, the subcommittee decided to confine data collection from students to those who had completed a minimum of three core courses. The subcommittee elected to survey all core course instructors since they bore major responsibility for implementation of the Goals of General Education. The subcommittee also decided to survey all general faculty and administrators, since the core courses are a product of the entire professional community and are central to the College's educational mission.

Particular community groups, as well as the general public, were surveyed because their understanding of the General Education Program is essential to the image of the institution and to the growth, improvement, or modification of the program. The general public group reflected a cross-section of single-family residents accessible by random ZIP mailing. The political group included all members of the State Board of Community Colleges, the Commissioner of Education, the Governor, all members of the State House of Representatives and Senate Education Subcommittees, and all members of the Dade County legislative delegation. Included in the Southeast Educational Consortium group were representatives of Barry University, Broward Community College, Florida Atlantic Univerity, Florida Memorial College, Florida International University, International Fine Arts College, Miami Christian College, Nova University, Palm Beach Community College, and the University of Miami.

The survey target group of employers and businesses was taken from two lists: the Directory of Dade County Major Employers (June 1963), and the Directory of Dade County Major Industrial Firms (January 1984), both prepared

by the Metropolitan Dade County Industrial Development Authority. All high school counselors in Dade County also had the opportunity to be surveyed. A supplementary survey of local media, service organizations, United Way agencies, ethnic organizations, and civic groups augmented the larger survey of local employers.

The Joint Collegewide Staff and Administrators Survey was sent to all College administrators, all professional staff, and one-third of the classified staff. All CLAST examinees from September 1984 were invited to complete a questionnaire after the test was administered. Survey forms were also mailed to equal numbers of graduates in Fall and Winter 1982-84.

Sampling rationale and procedures. The Core Courses Subcommittee wished to sample all those most affected by, and best able to evaluate, the College's General Education Program. It also wished to be accountable to students, faculty, staff and administrators, and to the community. The Self-Study Coordination Committee (SSCC), campus coordinators, and the subcommittee determined the sampling methods. The SSCC determined the final numbers of survey instruments to be distributed, and assured the subcommittee that a random sampling of general faculty and administrators, and a sample of one-third of core course instructors, would yield adequate and accurate data. With recommendations from the subcommittee (a detailed list may be found in the separate report annex), the campus coordinators determined the specific classes and individuals to be surveyed.

The Student Survey administered in Summer 1984 yielded 184 valid responses; the Fall survey, 331. Sixty surveys were returned by core course instructors, 112 by general faculty and administrators. The SSCC received 516 responses from participants in six community surveys, and 1,075 responses from CLAST examinees. The College's Office of Institutional Research tabulated and transcribed the

responses from the 207 recent Miami-Dade graduates.

Methods of data analysis and interpretation. The subcommittee reviewed the data primarily by item analysis, grouping positives and negatives, and recognizing statistically significant data. There was also a breakdown of data on the Student Survey and on the CLAST questionnaire by Associate in Arts and Associate in Science students. Some cross-referencing of data was possible because the same items appeared on several instruments.

From this broad data base, and from the responses to open-ended questions, the subcommittee drew conclusions about meeting 1974 self-study recommendations and about student, College personnel, and community reactions to the General Education Program. From this data base, the subcommittee developed twenty-six recommendations.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the staff and administrators, faculty, students, and the community felt that the quality of general education at Miami-Dade had improved, and that the 1974 self-study recommendations and observations concerning general education had been met. High approval was given to the general education model used at the College—including the institutional Goals of General Education, translated through core course goals and objectives, teaching strategies, materials, and resources. However, a number of findings indicated that further study would be appropriate in particular areas to ensure quality education and to control the directions of future program development. The study's principal recommendations were drawn from findings concerning awareness of the General Education Program, evaluation of core course objectives, and support for even more directive control over the general education curriculum, thereby emphasizing, and continuing movement toward, quality education.

This section of the report presents and interprets principal study findings, in narrative and graphic form. The analysis is organized under twenty-five study questions numbered consecutively within the following areas: core course concepts and goals; structure and organization; administration and operation; services, output, costs, and resources; and achievement of core course goals. Report sections concerning future plans and program strengths, weaknesses, problems, and areas of disagreement provide an overview of preceding report results and conclusions.

Core Course Concepts and Goals

The 1974 self-study clearly indicated that most faculty, administrators, and students were not satisfied with the General Education Program at Miami-Dade

Community College. The Goals of General Education and core courses are the heart of the General Education Program, envisioned at the end of the General Education Study, and then defined, implemented, and put into place. The most important subcommittee study objectives thus concerned the assessment of the Goals and core course objectives, by students, faculty, administrators and staff, and the community.

Subcommittee objectives concerning the General Education Program concept and the Goals were (1) to discover the attitudes of students, faculty, administrators and staff, and members of the community toward the College's Goals, the new General Education Program, and the idea of requiring five interdisciplinary core courses; (2) to determine the degree to which these Goals were perceived as understood, reflected in course content, and meaningful to the student; and (3) to discover whether there were any attitudinal differences among subgroups in relation to these issues.

An underlying issue addressed peripherally in this study concerned the differences between a primarily attitudinal survey, which measures personal levels of satisfaction/discontent/indifference, and a cognitive study which would more thoroughly evaluate the quality of the program. A follow-up study in the appropriate areas involving the core course instructors and supervisory personnel would separate affect from cognition and form a clearer picture for possible refinements of data.

Attitudinal responses to Goals. The first subcommittee objective--to survey attitudinal responses to the Goals, the General Education Program, and the five core courses--generated Questions 1-3, the results of which follow.

Question 1: Were the institutional Goals of General Education considered important? One of the first documents to come from the General Education Study

was the draft Goals of General Education, noted earlier. Assessment of the current General Education Program therefore logically began with assessment of these Goals. In various 1984 community surveys, respondents were asked to label ten phrases, paraphrased or inferred from the Goals, as "very important," "important," or "not important"—important to be taught or not to be taught at a community college, and important or not important for success after graduation. Table 1 indicates responses from various groups—general staff and administrators, community groups, and special subgroups of students, including CLAST examinees and recent graduates—who labeled the goal statements as either "very important" or "important."

As seen in Table 1, all ten items were endorsed by the various surveyed groups, most by overwhelming majorities. A further analysis of the data indicates that the strongest endorsement by all groups was "To help students improve their ability to write, speak, think, and listen" (Item 9). Those choosing the "very important" label ranged from 79% (CLAST examinees) to 100% (local agencies). So overwhelming was this endorsement that only two respondents ranked this item as "not important." Even the lowest-valued item on Table 1, "To help students improve the ways they use leisure time," ranged from 50% (local agencies) to 77% (high school counselors), both groups still regarding this goal as "very important" or "important."

Table 1

Positive Responses to Appropriate General Education Goals, by Percentages

	College	Community							Student	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1. To encourage students to make learning a lifelong process	98	100	100	97	100	91	99	100	95	95
2. To help students improve the ways they use leisure time	72	74	71	67	77	55	58	50	70	65
3. To encourage students to become registered voters	78	84	88	71	82	74	80	94	71	84
4. To enable students to evaluate different lifestyles	*	87	89	81	85	83	82	88	87	86
5. To make students more aware of economic, political, and environmental concerns	98	98	100	99	100	100	97	100	97	99
6. To make students more aware of their personal strengths	98	96	100	99	100	100	99	100	98	97
7. To encourage students to set realistic life goals	97	98	100	92	100	97	96	100	98	95
8. To help students better understand change caused by technology	98	97	100	100	98	95	94	100	97	96
9. To help students improve their ability to write, speak, think, and listen	100	99	100	100	100	100	100	100	99	100
10. To help students improve their ability to use mathematics	97	97	100	100	98	100	97	100	96	95

Key: A = College staff and administrators
B = general public
C = political groups
D = Educational Consortium group
E = high school counselors
F = employers and manufacturers
G = occupational program advisors
H = local agencies
I = CLAST examinees
J = 1982-84 Miami-Dade graduates

* Not on College survey instrument

Question 2: Which Goals of General Education surveyed were considered the most important? With the exception of those in the "general public" category (B), all respondents in categories listed on Table 1 were asked to rank in priority the three most significant of the ten phrases based on the institutional Goals of General Education. Southeast Florida Educational Consortium representatives were able to choose an additional item, "To properly prepare students for upper-division or baccalaureate study," which did not appear on other surveys. Table 2 shows results of the rank-ordering of the ten phrases based on the Goals and the added goal for the Consortium.

As seen in Table 2, with the exception of the choices by two special interest groups--political concerns for political groups, and preparation for further study, the added goal for the Educational Consortium--there was a consensus among groups on the relative importance of basic communications skills (Item 9), commitment to lifelong learning (Item 1), and setting realistic life goals (Item 7), with some interest in having students become more aware of their personal strengths (Item 6). Given the surprising consensus across these diverse groups as to which goals would be the most important ones for the College to pursue, strong emphases on these goals in College programs and planning would effect a high level of accountability to both students and the community.

Table 2

Rank-Ordering of General Education Goals

Goal Statements	College	Community						Student	
	A	*B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1. To encourage students to make learning a life-long process	2	2	2	2	3	2	2		2	3
5. To make students more aware of economic, political, and environmental concerns	0	3	0	0	0	0	0		0	0
6. To make students more aware of their personal strengths	0	0	0	0	2	0	0		3	3
7. To encourage students to set realistic life goals	3	0	0	3	0	3	3		3	3
9. To help students improve their ability to write, speak, think, and listen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1
Added Consortium Goal: To properly prepare students for upper-division or baccalaureate study	0	0	3	0	0	0	0		0	0

Note: 1 refers to "most important," 2 to "second most important," and 3 to "third most important."

Key: A = College staff and administrators
*B = not surveyed
C = political groups
D = Educational Consortium members
E = high school counselors
F = employers and manufacturers
G = occupational program advisors
H = local agencies
I = CLAST examinees
J = 1982-84 Miami-Dade graduates

Question 3: Should the Goals of General Education be rewritten or modified? A high number of respondents ranked the paraphrased Goal statement, "To help students improve the ways they use leisure time" (Item 2), and the inferred statement, "To encourage students to become registered voters" (Item 3), as "not important" (23% and 18%, respectively). The subcommittee thus believed that the College should provide a better rationale for the goal of using leisure time wisely and the idea of becoming registered voters, if they are to remain part of the aims of the College's General Education Program. The remainder of the paraphrased Goals of General Education included in these surveys were given strong endorsements and should, therefore, neither be rewritten nor modified.

Understanding and implementation of Goals. The second study objective concerning the General Education Program concept and the Goals--to assess understanding and implementation of the Goals and the impact of the five core courses--generated Questions 4-6, the results of which follow.

Question 4: Was the rationale of general education clearly understood? The subcommittee wished to determine whether the general education statements as translated through the Goals and core course objectives were fulfilling the recommendation contained in the 1974 self-study to make the rationale of general education more understandable to faculty and students. Of the general faculty and administrators responding to the Core Courses Survey for Faculty and Administrators, 85% agreed that efforts had been made "to make the rationale for general education clear and meaningful to faculty and students." Similarly, 80% of the core course instructors surveyed said they were "entirely" or "largely" familiar with the Goals. The subcommittee considered it desirable that all core course instructors, full- or part-time, become familiar with the Goals since the

Goals undergird the core courses and should be implemented in course content.

The most direct access to the College's rationale for general education—for both faculty and students—is through core course objectives and course content. All core course instructors responding to the Survey for Instructors of Core Courses believed the core course objectives were "perfectly clear" (17%), "generally clear" (47%), or "clear" (36%), while 76% replied that "all" or "most" of the individual objectives relate to the Goals. However, 31% of the core course instructors surveyed were dubious that core course students understood even "most" of the course objectives. Accordingly, 69% of the core course instructors saw clear need to modify the core course objectives--47% by "partial rewriting" and 26% by "deleting some existing objectives." The observations that many core course students did not understand core course objectives can be tested. In any core course where this proves true, the objectives can be rewritten in language which the majority of students readily understand.

Question 5: Were the institutional Goals of General Education implemented in course content? Of the core course instructors surveyed, 90% reported that they based core coursework "totally" or "primarily" on the collegewide core course objectives and covered "all" or "most" of the core course objectives in their individual classes. Instructors measured student achievement of objectives through such strategies as written exams (93%), written assignments (97%), and oral reports (67%). All of these percentages indicated strong commitment by the core course instructors to the general education competency-based education model espoused by Miami-Dade Community College.

Question 6: How influential were the core courses in helping students

attain the institutional Goals of General Education? Student surveys in the Summer and Fall Terms of 1984 included items asking respondents to what degree taking core courses had helped them achieve the goal statements paraphrased or inferred from the Goals of General Education. Positive percentages were obtained by adding those from the choices of greatest influence and moderate influence. Lists of goal statements used both in the Summer and Fall survey instruments were longer than those shown in Table 1, although many items were the same. Table 3 shows the positive percentages for all surveyed students, with breakdown by Associate in Arts and Associate in Science students.

Table 3 indicates that there was a wide range of influence attributed to having taken the core courses—from a low of 20% for A.A. students concerning participating in organizations other than social clubs (Item 24), to a high of 91% of A.A. students regarding increased ability to write (Item 1). Thus, taking the core courses somewhat influenced the achievement of every one of these goals.

Further, Table 3 clearly points out that the core courses were most successful in helping students develop skills in communications (Items 1-4), mathematics (Item 5), and syntheses of knowledge (Item 6); and in understanding or becoming more aware of basic knowledge in such areas as economics, politics, ecology (Items 7-9), and human behavior (Item 10). The influence of the core courses ranged from a low of 58% of Fall 1984 students believing the core courses had helped them understand social institutions (Item 9), to a high of 91% for A.A. students who gave credit to the core courses for their increased writing ability (Item 1). Particularly high percentages were given by all surveyed students to increased communications skills—89% to increased writing ability (Item 1), 81% to increased speaking ability (Item 2), 86% to increased thinking ability (Item 3), and 82% for increased listening ability (Item 4).

Table 3

Influence of Core Courses on Students in Attaining Goals of General Education

Goal Statements	Students All (%)	A.A. (%)	A.S. (%)
Basic Skills			
1. Increasing writing ability	89	91	82
2. Increasing speaking ability	81	81	80
3. Increasing thinking ability	86	87	81
4. Increasing listening ability	82	83	78
5. Increasing ability in mathematics	67	69	63
6. Seeing links in core courses	73	74	71
Basic Knowledge			
7. Being aware of economic, political, and environmental concerns	80	81	75
8. Understanding changes caused by technology	73	72	73
9. Understanding social institutions	58*	**	**
10. Understanding human behavior	78*	78*	74*
Personal Growth			
11. Using leisure time well	64	62	68
12. Being aware of personal strengths	82	82	82
13. Setting realistic life goals	75	75	74
14. Developing a philosophy of life	61	64	56
15. Finding historical perspective	61	62	57
16. Appreciating the humanities	72	76	67
17. Evaluating different lifestyles	71	71	72
18. Making realistic career choices	73	74	69
Behavioral Change			
19. Making a commitment to lifelong learning	77	79	71
20. Registering to vote	41	40	43
21. Working for political objectives	31	29	29
22. Making better TV selections	45	45	39
23. Increasing voluntary reading outside	55	55	50
24. Participating in groups other than social clubs	22	20	23

* Data on Items 9 and 10 were obtained from the Fall 1984 sample only, as the Summer 1984 survey instrument did not contain these goal statements.

** Valid data unavailable

Since increased communications skills are objectives in every core course, these percentages may increase as the writing-across-the-curriculum concept is further implemented.

The core courses were also successful in the broad area of personal growth. Most students believed that taking the core courses had helped them in making good use of leisure time, becoming more aware of personal strengths, setting more realistic life goals, developing a personal philosophy, finding historical perspective, learning to appreciate the humanities, and making a more realistic career choice.

The core courses were least successful in changing behavior, with the exception of 55% believing that the core courses helped them to make a commitment to lifelong learning (Item 19). In addition to the significantly low percentage of all students who thought that taking core courses influenced them even moderately in participating in organizations other than social clubs (22%), data on Table 3 show significantly low percentages for registering to vote (41%), working for political objectives (31%), and making better TV selections (45%). However, longitudinal studies might show at what time, if ever, these goals were attained and whether the core courses had any effect, since behavior obviously changes more slowly than awareness or increases in basic skills.

In summary, all of the Goals had an impact on students through core course objectives and content. Increases in basic knowledge and skills, and personal growth were more pronounced than were changes in behavior. A.A. students generally attributed more influence to the core courses than did A.S. students. A further breakdown of data indicated that Summer 1984 students attributed more influence in general to taking core courses than did Fall 1984 students. However, many percentages were not significantly different across the different data bases and therefore were not included in Table 3.

These conclusions were also supported by many of the write-in responses. Some of the CIAST examinees, recent graduates, and currently enrolled students still questioned the value of general education and its relevance to their education and to their lives. In particular many A.S. students--though rating the influence of core courses generally the same or slightly lower than did A.A. students (see Table 3)--wrote of struggling to see the relevance of the core courses, both for themselves and their programs. This perceived difficulty derived in part from the fact that A.S. students usually have clear career goals in mind. Therefore, the contents of general education core courses often seem tangential to their personal goals. The study subcommittee believed that a concerted effort to reduce this difficulty, through publicity and literature, is necessary to increase the College's accountability to students.

Attitudinal differences by subgroups. The third objective concerning core course concepts and the Goals--to examine attitudinal differences among subgroups--was reached, as reported above, through survey responses from broad categories, such as faculty, students, core course instructors, general staff and administrations, the community, recent graduates, and occasionally subgroups (e.g. A.A. and A.S. students, or classified staff and administrators, the political group and educators, and 1984 Summer and Fall students). This information includes much demographic data which could be examined for more subtle attitudinal differentiations.

Core Course Structure and Organization

The main objectives of the study subcommittee concerning the structure and organization of the core courses, and their support system, concerned (1) finding the levels of satisfaction/discontent/indifference toward structuring knowledge in five required interdisciplinary core courses; (2) discovering

whether the College's systems approach was placing students in situations in which they had the best chance for success when they registered for core courses; and (3) determining whether any additional basic skills or academic areas should be addressed by the core courses.

At issue was the commitment by Miami-Dade Community College to an integrated general education curriculum rather than early professional and disciplinary specialization. Also at issue was the basic belief that these five core courses helped students to make syntheses, see patterns and systems, understand general theories and ideas, and integrate life with learning, while providing a foundation for later specialization in professional or disciplinary training and for life.

The subcommittee examined (in data answering study questions 7 through 11) whether, through support or rejection of the core courses, the faculty supported or rejected the observation from the 1974 self-study that general education should be integrative and interdisciplinary, whether the core courses should be required of all degree-seeking students, whether any important or essential skills or information areas had been left out of the core, and the degree to which the faculty and students approved, disapproved, or were divided regarding individual core courses.

Question 7: How did students respond to the five required core courses?

Seventy percent of students surveyed "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they very much enjoyed taking core courses. Table 4 shows the evaluations by students of each core course completed.

Table 4

Student Evaluation of Completed Core Courses, by Percentages

Core Courses	Student Ratings			
	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)
Communications	28	49	18	5
Humanities	28	41	22	9
Energy in the Natural Environment	21	40	26	13
The Individual in Transition	48	33	15	4
The Social Environment	27	44	23	6

Key: 1 = "excellent" 3 = "fair"
2 = "good" 4 = "poor"

Of all the five core courses, the one evaluated the highest was The Individual in Transition, since 48% of all surveyed students who had completed that course ranked it "excellent." However, the combined percentages from students rating the courses as "excellent" or "good" indicate that a majority of students, from a low of 61% for Energy in the Natural Environment, to a high of 81% for The Individual in Transition, rated all of the core courses significantly high.

When the student ratings are further analyzed, only two negative findings appear. Fifty-three percent of A.S. students in Summer 1984 rated Energy in the Natural Environment as only "fair" or "poor," though the Fall 1984 sample, nearly double that of Summer, did not show a parallel negative response. The fact that Summer students rated Energy in the Natural Environment significantly lower than the other core courses (only 55% rated it "excellent" or "good" as compared to 74% for Communications, 71% for Humanities, 80% for The Individual

in Transition, and 70% for The Social Environment), might be coupled with the fact that only 37% of core course instructors felt that they could cover all the course's objectives in six weeks though 90% tried to do so.

A more surprising finding was the fact that 42% of the respondents had not taken Energy in the Natural Environment, although the target group was students who had taken three or more core courses. As stated earlier, the core courses were designed as an integrative and fundamental unit containing basic skills and information. Since previously cited findings indicated that the core courses had significant impact on students (Table 3), the study subcommittee concurred on the recommendation that all degree-seeking students should take the five core courses within their first thirty hours of coursework, thereby deriving the maximum effect from the core requirements.

Question 8: Should the core courses be required of all degree-seeking students? Of the core course instructors surveyed, 98% would require Communications and Humanities, 94% would require The Social Environment, 85% would require The Individual in Transition, and 76% would require Energy in the Natural Environment. These data show an obvious mandate, by those most familiar with core course content, to keep the core courses in their present forms and to require them of all degree-seeking students. Of the general faculty and administrators surveyed, 72% believed that fifteen credit hours were approximately the right number needed to accomplish the College's Goals of General Education.

CLAST examinees, on the other hand, were split on the issues of direction versus election, and of keeping required core courses intact versus modifying them. Nineteen percent favored keeping the core courses as they were, but wished to be able to choose freely from disciplinary areas rather than a

prescribed list of distribution courses; 30% wanted some course election but no change in core courses; 24% preferred the core courses and prescribed distribution course list to stay as they are; 23% wanted slight modifications, and 4% favored a complete overhaul of the core courses. In other words, 49% of the respondents wanted no change in core courses but some latitude in choice on the distribution/elective levels, 47% preferred little or no change on any level, and 4% advocated radical change in the General Education Program.

The study subcommittee's response to the request by Medical Center's Dean of Nursing Education--that the Humanities core course requirement be dropped in lieu of a composition distribution course required of A.A. students, and that the required Individual in Transition core course be dropped in lieu of Introduction to Psychology, a social science distribution course for A.A. students--also involved lengthy discussion involving the direction versus election issue. The subcommittee referred to the findings that A.S. students in both Summer and Fall 1984 were enthusiastic about both Humanities (70% in Summer, 78% in Fall) and the Individual in Transition (84% in Summer, 90% in Fall). Furthermore, the findings described above revealed that the faculty gave strong support (ranging from 76% to 98%) to requiring each of the core courses. Therefore, the subcommittee believed that nursing students were not a special case, and that the replacement courses recommended were not equivalent to the learning experiences of Humanities and The Individual in Transition. Like other degree-seeking students, nursing students should, in the subcommittee's view, continue to take all core courses. The subcommittee also felt that it is misleading to label the interdisciplinary Individual in Transition core course as Psychology 1000, thereby suggesting an introductory psychology course, for it covers many facets of the individual other than psychological ones, and is in no way duplicated by the College's introductory psychology courses.

If further study reveals that there are those for whom particular core courses are "largely familiar" or "totally repetitious," as some students claimed, they could be given the chance to take an honors version of the core course or allowed to substitute an appropriate distribution course in its place. A formal system of placement and exemption would fill this need.

Question 9: Should students with basic skills deficiencies be prohibited from registering for core courses? Of the staff and administrators who responded to the Collegewide Staff and Administrators Survey, a low of 75% of those in general staff and administrative positions who did not report to a particular campus, to a high of 87% of those at Medical Center Campus, believed in placement testing. In addition, from 90% of respondents at North Campus to 100% in nonspecific areas supported offering developmental instruction to students with basic skills deficiencies. Yet despite this virtual consensus and the 1974 self-study recommendation that a complete remedial program for general education should be established, only 55% of the respondents to the Core Courses Survey for Faculty and Administrators agreed that remedial assistance was available for each core course. The subcommittee concluded that, wherever lacking, a formal system of direct and specific remedial assistance should be established. Perhaps because of this perceived lack, the staff and administrators--ranging from a low of 44% at the Wolfson Campus to a high of 56% at South Campus (which also included data from District personnel)--were reluctant to prohibit those with basic skills deficiencies from registering for courses other than developmental ones.

The survey instrument given to core course instructors, however, included items more specifically concerning prohibition from, or prerequisites for, enrollment in core courses--rather than all classes other than developmental, as

on the staff and administrators survey. Large percentages of respondents to the core course instructors survey "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that students with writing and reading skills deficiencies should successfully complete developmental work before taking core courses (90% for reading, 91% for writing). The affected students--those who had either taken, or were recommended to take, developmental reading and/or writing--also agreed in large numbers (68% in Summer and 67% in Fall) that their performances in core courses would have been better had they first completed developmental reading and writing courses. Institutional research might more specifically correlate competencies in reading and writing with success in each core course. Since those most in touch with the issue--core course instructors, and students designated as having basic skills deficiencies--agreed, the study subcommittee concurred that successful completion of appropriate developmental reading and/or writing courses should be prerequisite to enrollment in core courses.

Question 10: Should individual core courses be taken at a specific time for maximum impact? Given the expressed desire described above by core course instructors for students to remedy basic skills deficiencies in reading and writing before enrolling in core courses, and given the highest ranking of importance by staff and administrators, CLAST examinees, recent College graduates, and varied community groups to the goal of increasing writing, speaking, thinking, and listening skills (Table 1, Item 9), the subcommittee concluded that the College should consider requiring the Communications core course (or appropriate developmental or English as a second language course) in the first major term of coursework for all degree-seeking students.

Question 11: Were there any additional basic skills or areas of knowledge

which should be made a part of the core requirements? Though 72% of faculty and administrators thought that fifteen was approximately the right number of credit hours needed to accomplish the Goals of General Education, 90% of the respondents wished to add "computer literacy" and 59% to add mathematics officially to core requirements. However, because "computer literacy" is a popular term with several meanings, and because there is no overwhelming agreement on the adding of mathematics to core requirements, the subcommittee felt that further study should be made before action is taken.

Of core course instructors surveyed, 66% said they required one or more research papers, and 92% of students surveyed in Summer and Fall 1984 reported that they had already been required to write one or more research papers. Currently, objectives concerning writing skills for research papers are located in the first composition distribution course. The study subcommittee concluded that if core course faculty are going to keep assigning research papers, as the findings indicated, course objectives concerning research skills should be relocated in the Communications core course and other appropriate core courses, and instruction in library/media research should be required in Communications.

Core Course Administration and Operation

The main objectives of the study subcommittee concerning the administration and operation of the five core courses, examined under Questions 12-17 which follow, were (1) to determine the levels of satisfaction/discontent/indifference among faculty and administrators assigned to teach required interdisciplinary core courses (often requiring retraining or extra reading); (2) to examine the extent to which faculty and students were being informed of the Goals of General Education and core course objectives (i.e., the rationale of general education supported by Miami-Dade); (3) to discover to what degree and under what

conditions core course instructors were following the competency-based educational model (i.e., transmitting the Goals through course content, and measuring attainment of course objectives); (4) to see whether the faculty and administrators approved the appointing of a single person to coordinate all the various aspects of the General Education Program.

The fundamental issue behind these objectives was the level of support and involvement given by the faculty and administration to a new program--not only philosophically but also pragmatically, particularly in core course instructors' preparing course materials outside academic majors, building new teaching strategies and assignments, and transmitting belief through the incorporation of the Goals into course objectives and content, a process alien to many. It is essential for the faculty and administration to give support to the core courses if the College's systems approach is to succeed.

Question 12: Did students enjoy taking core courses and did instructors enjoy teaching them? Seventy percent of the respondents to the Student Survey agreed that they enjoyed taking the core courses. Those teaching the core courses also responded positively: 60% of the respondents "strongly agreed," and 33% "agreed," that they enjoyed their core course assignments.

Question 13: Were administrators, faculty, and students familiar with the institutional Goals of General Education and with the core course objectives? Though one survey item dealt with general education reforms, and not specifically with core courses, the data are revealing: 85% of respondents to the staff and administrators survey reported being either "very familiar" (33%) or "somewhat familiar" (52%) with the general education reforms. In addition, of the core course instructors surveyed, 80% reported being "entirely" or

"largely" familiar with the Goals. However, this left 20% of the surveyed core course instructors who, if they are going to keep teaching core courses, need to become familiar with the institutionally defined Goals so that they can use the competency-based model.

Students were not asked directly about their familiarity with the Goals but seemed to have no trouble responding to items based on them. Students also easily answered that taking the core courses had influenced them to attain Miami-Dade's Goals of General Education (see Table 3).

Question 14: To what extent did core course faculty believe they had followed the competency-based model (i.e., incorporated core course objectives in actual course content and measured attainment of course objectives accordingly)? Of surveyed core course instructors, 76% reported that "all" or "most" of their course objectives related to the Goals, 90% covered "all" or "most" objectives in class, and 90% based core courses "totally" or "primarily" on stated objectives. In addition, 93% measured outcomes with written examinations, 97% with other types of written assignments, and 67% with oral reports. It thus appears safe to conclude that the competency-based model of general education is securely in place and working well at the College.

Question 15: Under what conditions did core course faculty believe the course objectives could be most successfully taught? Core course instructors, as reported earlier, preferred that students complete appropriate developmental work before enrolling in core courses. The time frame for the core course was also seen as a very important condition inhibiting the attainment of Goals and course objectives. Sixty-three percent of core course instructors felt that they could cover all of the appropriate objectives in sixteen weeks, but only

45% thought that they could cover the same objectives in twelve weeks, and only 38% felt they could cover them in six-week terms. The study subcommittee concluded that if the core courses are to remain equivalent learning experiences common to all, either teaching strategies should be developed which will help core course instructors to cover the same number of core course objectives in the shorter terms, or other solutions to this problem should be provided.

Question 16: Was there a comprehensive evaluation/review/revision system for the core courses? General faculty and administrators were surveyed in order to discover to what extent they perceived that the 1974 Institutional Self-Study recommendations concerning evaluation, review, and revision had been and were being met. The findings were mixed. Of the general faculty and administrators surveyed, only 64% reported being aware that there is a collegewide evaluation system for outcomes of the core courses, even though the Goals and core course objectives were easily recognized when referred to in other questions on the same survey. In contrast, 78% of the surveyed faculty and administrators agreed that there was no single campus-wide evaluation system, since faculty are allowed latitude in strategies, materials and resources, and methods of measuring attainment of objectives so long as they follow the collegewide system (e.g., teach the appropriate core course objectives and measure attainment by these objectives). On the other hand, 60% of the respondents believed that departmental or area administrators and students had thoroughly reviewed specific course content, goals, and objectives, and 68% reported that administrative reviews had resulted in restructured core course content and presentation. The study subcommittee felt that perhaps the respondents had not completely understood the questions, since other survey items indicated high awareness of, and support for, the competency-based

educational model and systems approach to general education. The subcommittee thus concluded that the recommendations from the 1974 self-study concerning evaluation/review/revision were effectively addressed, and that clarification from the College administration should inform faculty and administrators of this process and its results.

Question 17: Should there be a collegewide director of general education to integrate, coordinate, and supervise the General Education Program? The surveyed faculty and administrators were about evenly divided on this question: 48% agreed that there should be a director, and 52% believed that there should not. The General Education Program at the College is complex, and should the adminstration make further subdivisions in programs from the broader areas of education or academic affairs, the subcommittee felt that general education would be a logical choice for a new administrative position. However, no action was suggested by the study subcommittee.

Core Course Services, Output, Costs, and Resources

The study subcommittee earlier concluded that it was important that everyone teaching the core courses be aware of the entire systems approach. Because of the use of large numbers of new faculty and part-time instructors to teach core courses, regularly scheduled orientation sessions on the competency-based education model and Miami-Dade's systems approach to general education is essential if core courses are to have a high and positive impact on students. Since orientation workshops in the past have been successful, the subcommittee believed that they should be provided for in the core course budget.

Achievement of Core Course Goals

The main objectives of the subcommittee concerning the results of instituting the core courses, reported under the following treatment of Questions 18-21, were (1) to measure the levels of satisfaction, discontent, or indifference toward the new General Education Program in areas dealing with the overall goal of improving the quality of general education as perceived by students, faculty, staff and administrators, and by the community; and (2) to discover whether the students perceived the core courses as intellectually demanding and covering new information, but not overwhelming.

At issue were Miami-Dade's accountability to students and faculty, and its strong commitment both to an open admissions policy and to quality education. Implicit in the above objectives were the assumptions that understanding the rationale of general education, seeing the relevance of course content to life, and integrating knowledge all improve the quality of general education. The findings in this area were positive on all surveys.

Question 18: Did taking the core courses have a positive impact on students? All respondents indicated a high level of belief in the positive impact of the core courses. Of the general faculty reponding to the Core Courses Survey for Faculty and Administrators, 83% thought that taking the core courses helps Miami-Dade students to "lead more satisfying and useful lives" while 79% thought that taking the core courses helps students "become better members of the community in which they live." Large percentages of students (ranging from a low of 74% for Summer 1984 A.A. students, to a high of 82% for Fall 1984 A.S. students) agreed that taking core courses has "a positive impact" on Miami-Dade students. In Summer, 76% of the respondents, and in Fall, 65%, thought the core courses had helped them to "lead a more satisfying life," while 61% of the respondents in Summer and 55% in Fall thought that taking core

courses had made them "a better member of the community."

Question 19: Did students find the level of difficulty in the courses equal to, less than, or greater than expected? Table 5 records student expectations about the intellectual demands of each core course.

Table 5

Student Expectations of Level of Difficulty in Content of Completed Core Courses, by Percentages

	Levels of Difficulty			
	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)
Communications	18	53	25	4
Humanities	13	49	28	10
Energy in the Natural Environment	29	43	21	7
The Individual in Transition	14	53	19	9
The Social Environment	16	51	26	7

Key: 1 = "much more demanding than I expected"
2 = "somewhat more demanding than I expected"
3 = "somewhat less demanding than I expected"
4 = "much less demanding than I expected"

Data in Table 5 reveal that most students found the core courses more demanding than they had expected, and a higher percentage found Energy in the Natural Environment "much more demanding" than expected (29%, as compared to a range of 13% to 18% for the four other core courses). These data are misleading, however, for when the "much more demanding" and "somewhat more

demanding" responses are combined, the range of students finding each core course difficult is narrow (62% each for Humanities and The Individual in Transition, 71% for Communications, and 72% for Energy in the Natural Environment). Further analysis indicated that there are no statistically significant differences in percentages across the categories of the Summer and Fall or A.A. and A.S. students. Obviously, most students found each of the core courses intellectually challenging.

Question 20: To what extent was the material in each core course new to students? Table 6 lists the percentages of 1984 Summer and Fall students finding each core course familiar or repetitious. With the exception of students in Communications (who would have received much review and reinforcement in basic communications skills), most students surveyed in Summer and Fall 1984 found the core courses either "a totally new learning experience" or "largely a new learning experience" (77% for Humanities, 72% for Energy in the Natural Environment, 76% for The Individual in Transition, and 68% for The Social Environment). Although Humanities, more than any other core course, contained new material for more students (33%), the percentages for the other core courses except Communications were apart by only fifteen percent. Even 47% of respondents found Communications largely or completely a new learning experience.

In summary, the data reveal that the faculty and administration were convinced that the quality of general education improved with the new general education core courses. Responses from most surveyed students--showing belief that the core courses were intellectually demanding, a new learning experience, and beneficial to their lives--appeared to bear out faculty and administrative opinion. In this respect, the subcommittee concluded that it thus seems fully

possible to have both an open admissions policy, and quality in its General Education Program.

Table 6

Student Evaluations of Familiarity with Course Content in Completed Core Courses, by Percentages

Core Courses	Familiarity with Course Content 1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)
Communications	8	39	45	8
Humanities	33	44	18	5
Energy in the Natural Environment	31	41	22	6
The Individual in Transition	26	50	18	6
The Social Environment	18	50	26	6

Key: 1 = "a totally new learning experience"
2 = "largely a new learning experience, but with some familiar ideas"
3 = "largely a familiar learning experience, with some things occasionally new"
4 = "a totally repetitious learning experience"

Strengths, Weaknesses, Problems, and Areas of Disagreement Concerning Core Courses

The main objective of the study subcommittee was to obtain anonymous input, primarily subjective and attitudinal, on many questions. Therefore, a concerted effort was made not to load the survey questions in any particular direction. The core courses study pinpointed, with survey data summarized under Questions

21-23 which follow, large areas of satisfaction, agreement, and support; a consensus of desire for modification; and topics for further study and development.

At issue was the actual degree of satisfaction/discontent/indifference toward an entirely new program which had not yet been thoroughly evaluated. The previous data show an overwhelming level of support for the five core courses and for the competency-based educational model on which they are based. The core courses are part of a complex systems approach to general education which seems to be working well.

Question 21: What were the general feelings of the faculty, administration, students, and the community toward the general education reforms? As supplements to the data explored in this report section, write-in responses on surveys primarily applauded the College's efforts in the area of general education reforms and/or suggested that the movement toward quality education and more directive control over the general education curriculum should continue. Faculty, administrators, students, and the community found most of the Goals of General Education important to be taught at a community college (see Table 1). Most students thought the core courses excellent or good (see Table 4). Most students also found the core courses intellectually demanding (see Table 5) and containing necessary or new material (see Table 6), and believed that taking the core courses helped them attain the institutional Goals that they found important (see Table 3).

Question 22: Were there issues on which a large majority of respondent to surveys felt a need for change? A large number (69%) of core course instructors thought the core course objectives should be modified. Large

numbers of core course instructors (90% for writing deficiencies, 91% for reading deficiencies) also believed that students with these deficiencies should successfully complete developmental work before enrolling in the core courses. Most faculty and administrators (90%) wished to make "computer literacy" part of the general education core.

Question 23: What surveyed areas need more publicity or further study before other action is taken? Since 31% of the surveyed core course instructors were dubious whether students could understand "most" of the core course objectives, the study subcommittee thought that this assertion should be tested. Before changing any of the Goals of General Education or the core course objectives, content, or teaching strategies--based on the data in Table 1, showing the relative importance of the Goals, and those in Table 3, showing the impact of taking the core courses on attaining the Goals--further study is indicated to determine mitigating factors not surveyed or having long- rather than short-term impact. The write-in responses on the student surveys suggested that some students--A.S. students in particular--were still struggling to see the relevance of the core courses to their education and their lives. More pointed publicity and explanatory literature might reduce this perceived difficulty. Though the consensus (90%) of core course instructors surveyed was to add "computer literacy" to the core requirement, the study subcommittee felt that this idea needs careful consideration before any long-range plan is implemented, in view of state legislation to add "computer literacy" to primary and secondary public school requirements. Though large numbers of core course instructors (90% for writing deficiencies, 91% for reading deficiencies) believed that students with these basic skills deficiencies should successfully complete developmental courses before enrolling in any core courses,

institutional research could determine reading and writing competencies needed for success in each core course.

Future Core Course Plans

There are no broad future plans for the College's core courses beyond continuation. The General Education Program is still new (the core courses took the place of other general education core requirements in Winter 1982), and the results from the 1984 Institutional Self-Study should help to reveal needs for possible modifications and further study.

At issue in this area was the College's definition of general education, through the reactions to its new General Education Program which divided knowledge into five integrative courses required of all degree-seeking students at the College. Also relevant was the question whether such a program improved the quality of general education at the College.

The most obvious and important question for a heretofore little-evaluated program was considered to be whether the five core courses should remain substantially the same or be modified. A final question concerned what needs for further study emerged as a result of the study subcommittee's work. As clear from foregoing results, the data indicate overwhelming support for the core courses in their current forms. The data also show that faculty, administrators, students, and the community thought that the College has moved in the right directions for general education. Questions 24 and 25 relate to such consensus for the future of the core courses.

Question 24: Should the five core courses remain the same or be modified or rewritten? The only core course changes suggested by the subcommittee's research would be a thorough review of the core course objectives, with

modification of competencies, teaching strategies, materials, and resources, if this review indicates that the core course objectives should be modified.

Question 25: Were there any other germane issues not surveyed by the subcommittee which emerged from the study and warrant further study? An important though not urgent follow-up study to what has here been primarily a broad attitudinal approach would be another survey of core course instructors and appropriate administrators, directed more specifically toward evaluating the intellectual quality of the courses. The subcommittee was also interested in the impacts of reducing class size on the quality of general education, of adding a third English composition requirement to the General Education Program requirements, and of implementing the writing-across-the curriculum concept and the "Gordon Rule," which requires students to write a total of 24,000 words, in classes in which they earned a minimum grade of C, before entering their junior year.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROJECTIONS

Each source of evaluative information concerning the core courses portion of the General Education Program at Miami-Dade Community College--students, administrators, staff, faculty, and members of the community--revealed areas for further development and improvement of a coherent General Education Program, accountable to students, faculty, and community. The following recommendations, derived from these data, are those which the Core Courses Subcommittee considered most important. Though numbered consecutively, they are also ordered within each of four groups by priority. This section of the report also provides time-phased plans for implementing the recommendations, including proposed steps and resources, conditions, procedures, and policies which implementation would require.

Institutional Research (IR)

Recommendation 1. The College should investigate the observation by core course instructors that a substantial number of core course students do not understand the course objectives.

The Office of Institutional Research will construct and conduct this investigation during the 1985 Fall Term (1985-1) and make its findings available to appropriate personnel at the beginning of the 1986 Winter Term (1985-2).

Recommendation 2. The College should evaluate the significance of the lowest-ranked phrases based on the Goals of General Education--those of using leisure time well and becoming registered voters--and of the low impact accorded to core courses in changing behavior--specifically, registering to vote, working for political objectives, and participating in groups other than social clubs.

The Office of Institutional Research will design and conduct a study (possibly longitudinal) to assess the significance of these findings.

Recommendation 3. The College should determine the reading and writing competencies needed for success in each core course.

The Office of Institutional Research will design and conduct a study to correlate specific reading and writing competencies with success in each core course.

Recommendation 4. The College should evaluate the impacts on core course students of writing across the curriculum, fulfilling the "Gordon Rule," and taking a third required composition course.

The Office of Institutional Research will design and conduct an impact study to address the concerns of faculty about these recent General Education Program requirements.

Recommendation 5. The College should evaluate the impact of reduction of class size in Communications and the applicability of these findings to other core courses.

The Office of Institutional Research will design and conduct an impact study to evaluate the possible effects of the reduction of class size in Communications and discuss the feasibility of applying the findings to other core courses.

Recommendation 6. The College should conduct a follow-up study of the core courses which emphasizes the quality of the General Education Program.

The present study is primarily attitudinal. To fully evaluate the core

courses portion of the General Education Program, the Office of Institutional Research will design and conduct a study which will more directly address the quality of the General Education Program.

Collegewide Committees for Each Core Course

Recommendation 7. A collegewide committee for each core course should be appointed.

The College administration will, at the beginning of the 1986 Winter term (1985-2) select, from each campus, one faculty member whose principal duty is the teaching of that core course and one associate dean (or his/her designee) in whose division the core course is administratively located, to comprise a collegewide committee for that core course, in order to coordinate the many related recommendations generated by the study. These five collegewide committees will be guided in their tasks by the relevant findings of the 1984 self-study and the IR studies outlined above. The committees will report their recommendations to the collegewide general education core committee described below no later than the end of the 1986 Winter Term (1985-2), although as many recommendations as possible should be presented before that time.

Recommendation 8. The institutionally defined Goals of General Education should remain substantially the same, but a better rationale for the goals of using leisure time well and becoming registered voters should be provided.

By the end of Winter 1986 (1985-2) the five collegewide core course committees will develop a better rationale for using leisure time well. The Social Environment committee will develop a better rationale for the goal of becoming registered voters. Any changes made in the Goals as a result of this recommendation will be reviewed and possibly modified in light of the findings

from the longitudinal study described in Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 9. The objectives for each core course should be evaluated, and plans for their modification should be devised. Using data from the IR study described in Recommendation 1, each collegewide core course committee should rewrite any core course objectives which have proven too difficult for the majority of core course students to readily understand. Objectives should be developed for writing informal research papers; these objectives should then be located in the Communications core course and other core courses in which instructors are likely to require informal research papers.

The core courses subcommittees will evaluate the objectives of each core course and submit plans for modification to appropriate College administrators by the end of Winter 1986 (1985-2). The Communications core course committee will (1) modify the existing English Composition objective that students will be competent in presenting information in writing on a given subject, to require that the information will be based on research from at least three sources; (2) add the objective that students will acquire the skills necessary to find these sources (possibly in a library/media research program, preferably devised and administered by campus library personnel with the support of Communications instructors); and (3) specify that these objectives be located in the Communications course since students are likely to encounter the request for an informal research paper in any class in any term. The Individual in Transition committee will investigate the feasibility of assigning a designation other than "psychology" to The Individual in Transition core course, since this interdisciplinary core course covers many facets other than psychological.

Recommendation 10. A collegewide system of placement in, and exemption from, core courses, with movement to an honors version of the course or an appropriate distribution course, should be established for those for whom the work is repetitious. Otherwise, the core courses should continue to be required for all degree-seeking students.

By the end of Winter 1986 (1985-2), core course committees will devise a system to identify students for whom the contents of core courses are "largely familiar" or "totally repetitious" of information they have already acquired (see Table 6). The committees will also develop placement and exemption criteria and procedures for these students.

Recommendation 11. Wherever lacking, specific and direct remedial assistance on each campus for each core course should be provided.

The collegewide core courses committees will work with appropriate areas beginning in Winter 1986 (1985-2) to develop, implement, and improve remedial assistance.

Recommendation 12. Faculty should make a greater effort to show students (especially in A.S. programs) the relevance of the core courses to their educational objectives and their lives.

By the end of Winter 1986 (1985-2), the core course committees will suggest appropriate changes in the course syllabi to strengthen the rationale of general education for students, with special emphasis for the A.S. population.

Recommendation 13. Teaching strategies to help core course instructors teach all core course objectives in the twelve- and six-week terms should be explored.

By the end of Winter 1986 (1985-2), the core course committees will, after research and consultation with core course instructors, recommend appropriate teaching strategies for teaching approximately the same number of course objectives in every term.

Collegewide General Education Core Committee

Recommendation 14. The College should appoint a collegewide general education core committee.

This committee will consist of five faculty members and five administrators (or their designees), chosen at the beginning of the 1986 Winter Term (1985-2) as follows: one faculty member representing each existing core course, whose principal duty is teaching that core course; two associate deans of humanities representing the communications and humanities areas, two associate deans of social science representing the social sciences and the areas covered in The Individual in Transition; and one associate dean of natural sciences. All campuses will be represented among both the faculty and administrative members. This committee will be guided in its tasks by the relevant findings of this self-study and by results of the Institutional Research studies mentioned above. During the 1986-87 academic year, it will also move to evaluate, coordinate, and expedite plans, recommendations, and suggestions deriving from the work of the individual collegewide core course committees, also described above.

Recommendation 15. The core course requirements should be reviewed and evaluated.

Specific charges of the collegewide general education core committee will be to implement Recommendations 16 and 17, which follow.

Recommendation 16. The inclusions of mathematics and "computer literacy" in the required basic core should be considered.

Recommendation 17. Suggestions concerning a designation other than "psychology" for the Individual in Transition core course should be considered.

College Administration

The College administration will also be guided in its tasks by relevant findings of this self-study and the Institutional Research studies described above. These tasks will be completed no later than the end of the 1985-86 academic year. The College administration will consider recommendations of the collegewide general education core committee sometime during the four months following their presentations (omitting Spring and Summer Terms). Following such consideration and conferring, the administration will implement, within four months, those parts of the recommendations of which it approves.

Recommendation 18. All appropriate administrators, staff, and core course instructors should be informed about the College's competency-based general education model (including the Goals of General Education, and the core course goals and objectives, teaching strategies, materials, and resources) and about the College's complete systems approach to general education.

The District administration will move as early as feasible to establish on-going orientation workshops for all appropriate personnel, but especially for new full- and part-time core course faculty. District will also publicize and explain the on-going evaluation/review/revision process for all core courses to all appropriate faculty, staff, and administrators.

Recommendation 19. The College administration should continue to place emphases in College planning and programs on improving students' basic skills, making commitments to lifelong learning, setting realistic life goals, and becoming aware of personal strengths. As one specific implementation of this recommendation, the administration should make a greater effort, through publicity and literature, to show students (especially those in A.S. programs) the relevance of the core courses to their educational objectives and lives.

The appropriate District administrators will emphasize, in future plans and programs, those general education goals rated most highly by a wide consensus of faculty, staff and administrators, students, and the community. Appropriate District administrators will also emphasize the relevance of general education to A.S. students through appropriate publicity and literature.

Recommendation 20. In further implementation of its general education reforms, the College should continue to move in the educational directions it has been going: toward more directive control and quality education.

Consideration of Recommendations 21-24 will increase the quality of general education at the College by increasing the degree of directive control over the general education curriculum.

Recommendation 21. All degree-seeking students should take the Communications core course (or an appropriate reading and/or writing developmental course, or English as a second language) in the first major term of coursework.

Recommendation 22. Those degree-seeking students who lack reading and

writing competencies essential for success in core courses (as determined by the study outlined in Recommendation 3) should successfully complete appropriate developmental or English as a second language courses prerequisite to enrollment in core courses.

Recommendation 23. All degree-seeking students should take the five required core courses within their first thirty hours of coursework.

Recommendation 24. The college should continue to implement the writing-across-the-curriculum concept.

By considering Recommendations 21-24, the College administration will further demonstrate its commitment to quality education.

Recommendation 25. The current General Education Program should continue to operate using the present competency-based education model.

The College will modify its present General Education Program only after careful study, evaluation, and consultation.

Recommendation 26. The College administration should formally evaluate the impacts made by the 1984 self-study of the core courses.

Appropriate administrators will evaluate the changes in the core courses made as a result of this 1984 self-study in a collegewide report distributed during the 1990-91 academic year.

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND CURRICULUM REFORMS

PART 2

DISTRIBUTION COURSES AND ELECTIVES

MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

1984 INSTITUTIONAL SELF-STUDY

ABSTRACT

This report presents results of a comprehensive evaluation conducted in 1984 of the distribution and electives portion of the Miami-Dade Community College General Education Program. The general education distribution courses constitute the second level of a three-tiered structure. Five required general education core courses (examined in the Core Courses Subcommittee study) form the first tier, while free elective courses, as the third tier, include all general education courses not included in the first or second. The study focused primarily on the impact and effectiveness of the distribution courses, in order to accomplish four major study goals: (1) to determine how well distribution courses are meeting the goals set for them; (2) to evaluate how students and faculty view distribution courses; (3) to identify what changes, if any, in distribution courses are needed; and (4) to assess the impacts of external forces upon the program. Because core course and distribution requirements consume the greater part of associate degree student courseload, the subcommittee determined that there would no purpose in examining the limited remaining elective options.

The nine participants in the investigating group comprised one of three subcommittees of the collegewide Academic Policies and Curriculum Reform Committee. The Distribution and Elective Courses Subcommittee included two faculty representatives from each of the four Miami-Dade campuses, and one District resource person. In addition to a thorough review of pertinent sections in the College's 1974 self-study final report, the study group designed two surveys, each using checklist and open-ended items. The student survey, administered in the Spring and Fall Terms of 1984 to 1,010 students and generating 760 valid responses, a 76% return, provided the main source of

information for findings relating to students. The faculty survey, which included returns from one-sixth of the College faculty, provided the basis for faculty findings.

Data obtained in response to questions based on the four principal study goals noted above indicate widespread satisfaction with the distribution program and operation among faculty and students. These groups indicated that the goals of the distribution courses were clear and were being met. However, some survey respondents still pinpointed areas for possible modification.

Faculty concerns included a desire for improvement in the placement and movement of students in writing areas. Faculty members at North and South Campuses felt that their views had limited direct impact on the makeup of the distribution course list. Further, faculty identified a need to determine the impact of new requirements on the ability of departments to offer upper-level electives, and a need to orient the faculty who were unaware of the role of distribution courses in the overall General Education Program.

The student survey returns displayed unexpected uniformity regardless of campus. Most students reported that they chose distribution courses because these courses were required for their majors, and consequently, did not favor deleting any courses. While many students did indicate some desire for expansion of the current offerings, they did not agree on particular choices. The students were almost evenly divided regarding the need to take a core course before an appropriate distribution course. When asked to address each area specifically, however, they expressed overwhelming support for sequencing of mathematics and composition, and strong support for sequencing in the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. Apart from night students, most respondents indicated no desire to go to another campus to take a distribution course.

An area of concern for some students was humanities. These students found it difficult to see a logical relationship between the Humanities core course and corresponding distribution offerings. A small minority vehemently opposed being required to take any humanities courses.

To help ensure continued student and faculty satisfaction with the distribution portion of the General Education Program, a number of specific areas for improvement were identified. These principally related to fine-tuning specific parts of the system rather than urging major changes. The study subcommittee recommended finding the causes of student confusion regarding the roles of the Humanities core course, and of humanities in general, in the General Education Program, and devising ways to make the humanities more relevant to students, since the intensity of the attacks on humanities in the write-in responses was considered significant. The subcommittee also recommended that means beyond the current credit-by-exam procedure should be devised to permit students who demonstrate proficiency in writing skills to start at a higher level in composition. A related recommendation encouraged the College to allow students with demonstrated superior writing abilities to substitute literature for required composition courses, thereby strengthening the place of literature in the general education curriculum. The subcommittee further recommended: discovering whether faculty at North and South Campuses desire more influence over the selection of future distribution courses; ensuring an adequate variety of distribution evening classes at the Wolfson and Medical Center Campuses; providing faculty with increased information about the role of distribution courses in the overall General Education Program; and having the views of all faculty represented in significant future changes in the distribution area of the General Education Program.

BACKGROUND

The late 1960s and early 1970s at Miami-Dade Community College were characterized primarily by a spirit which valued acceptance and tolerance. The general education curriculum reflected this spirit in its wide elective choices and broad opportunities for self-direction. The College's institutional self-study of 1974, however, clearly established that the College, in its efforts to provide access to the new students of the 1960s, had emphasized access without a corresponding emphasis on the quality of learning taking place. Thus a recommendation of the 1974 self-study was to reevaluate the College's General Education Program in order to provide a more coherent and unified approach to general education. The collegewide General Education Study of 1975-78 was a direct result of addressing the concerns about general education raised in the 1974 self-study. Recommendations and observations from the General Education Study led to the extensive educational reforms set out in General Education in a Changing Society (Lukenbill and McCabe, 1978). A history of Miami-Dade's general education program, 1974 self-study recommendations pertinent to general education, and stages in the subsequent nine-year process of implementing general education reforms at the College are offered in this volume's Introduction.

The present General Education Program at Miami-Dade grew out of a proposal by a collegewide General Education Steering Committee that included a three-tiered approach. The first tier consisted of five core courses of three credits each, introducing students to various facets of major academic disciplines and providing an educational experience common for all degree-seeking students. These core courses included Communications, The Natural Environment (later Energy in the Natural Environment), The Social

Environment, Humanities, and The Individual (later The Individual in Transition). Description and evaluation of this portion of the General Education Program may be found in the Introduction of this volume and the preceding core courses report.

General education distribution courses formed the second tier. Although students were required to take one distribution course in each of three areas (the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences), they were given a choice among a limited number of options in each category. The distribution courses provided more in-depth instruction in discipline areas than that of the five first-tier core courses, but maintained the general education philosophy by being general in nature and value-oriented. They provided a general understanding of a particular approach to learning, rather than being courses that prepared students for major areas of study or particular career fields.

Finally, the third tier, elective courses, constituted all general education courses not included in the first or second tiers. Students could take these courses at any point in their programs, although the clear intent was that they would follow core and distribution courses.

The present general education distribution courses were developed by collegewide committees following a set of predetermined criteria. The courses recommended by these committees were reviewed by the College Committee on Academic Affairs. The resulting list was submitted to the President's Council for final approval. Those courses that were accepted became the distribution portion of the present General Education Program. This present study focused primarily on the distribution courses. The subcommittee's review of the limited elective offerings and options for taking elective classes in the College's General Education Program suggested that there would be no advantage or purpose to pursuing their study at any length.

CURRENT PROGRAM SCOPE

The nature of Miami-Dade Community College's original General Education Program changed shortly after its implementation because of the adoption of the State Board of Education "Gordon Rule" (SBE 6A-10.30), which requires Associate in Arts students to produce a total of 24,000 words in classes in which they attain a minimum grade of C before they enter their junior year, and to complete two mathematics courses at the level of College Algebra or higher. The passage of the state-legislated College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST), which students must pass to graduate from community college and gain junior standing at state-supported universities, also affected the General Education Program.

First, mathematics was introduced as a requirement, with a proficiency level as prerequisite to enrollment in the Energy in the Natural Environment core course. Next, writing components were added to all core courses, and "writing across the curriculum" requirements were initiated to help meet the "Gordon Rule" requirements. Then, English Composition became the required distribution course for Communications, with other options deleted to help meet the "Gordon Rule" requirements and strengthen students' preparation for the CLAST examination. Later, a third English composition course, Advanced Composition (ENC 2301), was made a requirement when it became clear from the early CLAST results that many Miami-Dade students needed additional writing practice in order to pass the CLAST writing subtests. Finally, another change prompted by these externally imposed requirements was the need for students to pass the core, English composition, and mathematics courses with a grade of C or better, in order to have them counted toward an Associate in Arts (A.A.) degree. Accordingly, for all practical purposes, the mathematics and English composition distribution courses can be regarded as having been incorporated into the

General Education Program core.

In its present form, the distribution tier of the College's General Education Program thus requires each A.A. student to complete a minimum of three credits in each of five areas--the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences, and two areas of mathematics--and three credits each in two levels of English composition. The courses in English composition are specified; those in other areas involve limited choices (see Figure 2 in the volume Introduction for the currently approved collegewide list of distribution courses). Twenty-four additional elective credits are selected in light of program and/or major requirements and future academic plans. Associate in Science (A.S.) and Planned Certificate students are not required to take distribution courses except as specified by individual programs or majors.

JUSTIFICATION FOR EVALUATION

The educational reforms at Miami-Dade were the result of three years of intense study, from which two paramount issues emerged: how the College could provide for the integration of knowledge by individual learners, and how it could promote shared bonds of experience across a community of learners. The General Education Program, though dating only from the Fall and Winter Terms of the 1981-82 academic year, now has patterns sufficiently developed to allow identification of needed improvements.

At present, the possible distribution course selections are quite extensive and yet continue to grow, based on rather intangible criteria. Therefore, it was felt that the present self-study offered a timely opportunity and an appropriate vehicle to assess the impact and effectiveness of the distribution courses, as well as to develop recommendations, from objective evaluation data and experience, for future decisions. In addition, the introduction of State Board of Education and state legislative authority into the equation, causing composition and mathematics distribution courses to be required, has significantly altered the state education environment.

HOW THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

Subcommittee Organization

The group charged with evaluation of the distribution/elective courses was a subcommittee of the collegewide Academic Policies and Curriculum Reform Committee. The College Self-Study Coordination Committee approved the members of the subcommittee and delivered their charge. Two faculty members from each of Miami-Dade's four campuses and one District resource person, all with expressed interests, diverse backgrounds, and wide experience in the General Education Program, comprised the subcommittee. The campus members assumed responsibility for investigating the particular concerns about distribution courses on their respective campuses. The subcommittee as a whole assumed responsibility for determining common features of the distribution courses to study.

Approach to Assignment

The members of the subcommittee became familiar with the literature produced during the formation of the College's philosophy of general education, together with research data bearing on distribution courses. They also shared personal experiences and attitudes concerning the distribution courses. With these approaches, they defined what should be investigated in regard to distribution courses and the best means for conducting the investigation. Feeling that other colleges and universities, as well as the general public, lacked significant exposure to Miami-Dade's three-tiered approach to general education, the study subcommittee decided not to survey these groups directly. The subcommittee therefore determined that its evaluation objectives could best be met by directing attention to College students and faculty.

Key Study Goals and Objectives

Since the distribution portion of the general education reforms plays a key role in the success of the three-tiered approach, the study subcommittee decided that it was essential to know how well these courses have been meeting the goals set for them and to evaluate how students and faculty viewed them. In light of the state-mandated changes noted above, it was thought equally important to determine how the changes imposed on the initial General Education Program have affected it. Finally, the subcommittee believed it was important to identify needed improvements either in courses offered or how they were offered. The study thus sought answers to four major questions: (1) How well were the distribution courses meeting the goals originally set for them? (2) How were these courses viewed by faculty and students? (3) What changes, if any, were needed? (4) What forces have had a significant impact on the implementation of this part of the College's General Education Program?

Data Sources and Target Groups

The study subcommittee organized the present study upon the practical, philosophical, experiential, and statistical information generated by the General Education Study of 1975-78. The subcommittee began with the principles of General Education in a Changing Society (Lukenbill and McCabe, 1978) and evaluated the present general education distribution courses by those principles to determine the extent to which the present courses were attaining their intended goals. The subcommittee then developed sixteen questions to address four major study areas--meeting program goals and objectives, measuring effectiveness, suggesting improvement, and assessing the impacts of outside forces. A complete list of these questions is located in the separate report

annex.

Two original surveys, using checklist and open-ended items, were generated by the study subcommittee. These surveys were intended to assess relevant issues from both student and faculty viewpoints in order to obtain as objective a picture of attitudes toward distribution courses as possible. Since attitudes relevant to such general education goals as students' developing the capacity for self-direction, interpersonal skills, and knowledge of ideas and events that have shaped society were pursued by the Core Courses Subcommittee, the Distribution/Elective Courses Subcommittee did not examine these issues.

The subcommittee agreed that the perceptions of Miami-Dade students who had taken some of the distribution courses would be most valuable in responding to questions they considered important to study. To ensure that an accurate cross section of students received the survey developed by the subcommittee, it was decided that two administrations of the survey would be necessary. Experience convinced subcommittee members that spring terms included different groups of students from groups available in fall or winter terms. Members thought the 1984 Spring Term would include many students from four-year schools taking courses for transfer, students seeking to accelerate completion of their studies by earning extra credits, and professional people taking advantage of the short term to upgrade their skills.

Sampling

In the Spring Term of 1984 (1983-3), the subcommittee's student survey was sent to distribution classes having a estimated total enrollment of 508 students. The actual number of students filling out the survey was 370, a 73% return. These students represented those who had remained after the final day to drop classes. Students taking classes both on- and off-campus received the

survey. In Fall 1984 (1984-1), the student survey was sent early in the term to students in distribution classes having an estimated total of 502 students. Valid responses were received from 390, a 78% return. In summary, of 1010 students, 760 responded, a 76% return. Obviously, respondents in both samples were currently taking at least one distribution course. Students from all four Miami-Dade campuses, and in both day and evening classes, were surveyed. In both survey administrations, care was taken to ensure that surveys were distributed on a proportional basis, as determined by 1984 statistics on full-time enrollment. Accordingly, more surveys were administered at the larger campuses (North and South) than at the smaller campuses (Wolfson and Medical Center).

Also during Fall 1984, a randomly selected sample of approximately one-third of the College faculty was sent the subcommittee's faculty survey. The subcommittee received returns from approximately one-half of those surveyed.

In addition, the subcommittee received information from nine surveys conducted by the Self-Study Coordination Committee, which included responses from members of the community as well as College staff and administrators, CLAST examinees, and 1982-84 graduates. Those survey instruments are described in Volume I.

Research and Analytical Methods

The study subcommittee focused attention on the humanities, social science, and natural science distribution groups because the courses in composition and mathematics are now required of all students. As many different courses as possible from the approved collegewide distribution list for the remaining three areas were surveyed. In order to obtain a balanced student viewpoint, the subcommittee decided to survey distribution courses with both high and low

enrollments, and both classes in which there were likely to be students beginning their distribution coursework and classes in which there were likely to be students near the ends of their programs. Finally, the subcommittee included a number of open-ended questionnaire items to obtain information unobtainable with a "suggested-answer" format.

The faculty survey contained many of the same questions asked of the students. The subcommittee primarily wished to determine faculty perceptions of the roles distribution courses have played within Miami-Dade's general education reforms, assess the ability of these courses to fulfill the College's general education goals and objectives, identify needed improvements, and define the impacts of distribution courses on faculty and their work.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section of the report treats faculty and students separately, covering findings in the four areas of the major study goals: meeting of course goals and objectives, measuring effectiveness, suggesting improvements, and assessing impacts of external forces.

Faculty Findings

Meeting program goals and objectives. Overall, there was widespread agreement among faculty that the goals of the distribution courses were clear and were being met. Asked to suggest additions or deletions, in an open-ended item faculty generally expressed preference that most courses included should remain, and belief that no new courses were needed because sufficient choice already existed in the present structure. The open-ended responses also indicated that faculty were generally in accord with the College's philosophy regarding the distribution courses.

Experience at the College has demonstrated that the faculty usually do not hesitate to respond whenever they have strong opinions about a particular matter. The subcommittee thus concluded from these data that either there existed no strong faculty feeling regarding reduction or augmentation of the distribution courses list, or there existed a cautious "wait and see" attitude. As a result, the study subcommittee believed that the College administration should have a corresponding approach to change in the College's distribution program.

Another survey item dealt with faculty perceptions of the roles distribution courses have played in the overall General Education Program. As shown by data presented in Table 1, faculty accurately perceived the distribution courses as designed to introduce students to many facets of a subject, in line with College general education criteria.

Table 1

Faculty Responses to Purposes of Distribution Courses, by Percentages

Purposes of Distribution Courses	Campuses				
	North (%)	South (%)	Wolfson (%)	Medical (%)	All (%)
A survey	43.2	38.8	58.8	27.8	40.5
An introduction to a sequence	29.5	34.3	35.3	44.4	35.1
An advanced course for majors	4.5	4.5	0	11.1	6.1
An advanced course for non-majors	4.5	4.5	0	11.1	4.7
Other	18.3	14.9	5.9	5.6	13.6

In contrast to the evidence shown on Table 1 that most faculty (75.6%) clearly understood that distribution courses are intended as "a survey" or "an introduction to a sequence," differences between those of generalist and specialist orientations in education were revealed by the open-ended responses. A number of faculty preferring to see students launched more directly into their major fields expressed disagreement with generalist philosophy. Faculty outside occupational areas were primarily concerned with the impacts of the third required composition course (ENC 2301) and mathematics requirements on reducing elective offerings. Occupational faculty members in particular felt that too much emphasis was being placed on general as compared to specialized values. Further, they expressed concern that required courses had affected their ability to provide students with needed specialized training. In their open-ended responses, some faculty also expressed a related idea: because the general education requirements consumed so many credits, many students were prevented from acquiring, within a two-year time frame, enough necessary or useful course

credits to enter prescribed career courses in upper-division transfer institutions. Miami-Dade, they believed, had in effect become, for these students, a three-year college, with general education requirements undesirably delaying the attainment of career objectives. While this idea surfaced on all four campuses, it appeared to be of major concern at the Medical Center Campus.

Measuring effectiveness. The faculty responses present a clear picture of attitudes towards teaching the various courses in the three tiers of the general education reform, as shown in Table 2. Since respondents had the opportunity to give multiple responses to the questionnaire item, the columns do not add up to 100%. The majority of the surveyed faculty (57%) indicated a strong preference for teaching elective courses. A lesser number (26%) preferred teaching distribution courses. Only 19.3% preferred teaching core courses.

Table 2

Faculty Ranking of Most Preferred General Education Teaching Assignments, by Percentages

Teaching Assignments Most Preferred	Campuses				
	North (%)	South (%)	Wolfson (%)	Medical (%)	All (%)
General education core courses	9.3	17.9	38.5	40.0	19.3
General education distribution courses	32.6	20.6	23.1	35.7	25.7
General education elective courses	62.8	63.8	38.5	20.0	57.0

Although there were some differences among campuses, the overall data in Table 3 indicate that 76% of the College faculty least preferred teaching the general education core and distribution courses. Again, the opportunity for faculty to make multiple responses led to data in some columns that do not total 100%.

Table 3

Faculty Ranking of Least Preferred General Education Teaching Assignments, by Percentages

Teaching Assignments Least Preferred	Campuses				
	North (%)	South (%)	Wolfson (%)	Medical (%)	All (%)
General education core courses	58.1	58.2	30.8	40.0	54.3
General education distribution courses	23.3	20.6	30,8	21.4	22.1
General education elective courses	11.6	20.3	38.5	33.3	22.5

From data on Tables 2 and 3, the subcommittee concluded that many faculty were not teaching classes that they preferred to teach, and were teaching classes that they least preferred to teach. Faculty preferences to teach general education electives and not to teach core and distribution courses were determined by the study subcommittee to be due in part to the interdisicplinary content of these courses, whereas the faculty are predominantly discipline- and subject-oriented by training and inclination. Because of the lack of any strong criticism of the present framework, however, the subcommittee believed that while faculty may prefer to teach other courses, they are not unhappy teaching

their assigned courses.

Table 4 further shows no strong faculty sentiment for either increasing or reducing the number of distribution courses. A total of 42.5% of faculty preferred that the number remain the same. The subcommittee had expected that faculty would wish to expand the number of distribution courses. Instead, as Table 4 shows, only 19.4% wished to add courses, while 57.4% indicated that there was a sufficient number for selection. On the other hand, some of the same respondents indicating that the distribution course list was adequate suggested particular additional courses when asked specifically to do so. The natural sciences received the largest number of suggested additions. Nevertheless, lack of any consensus on which courses should be added or deleted led the subcommittee to conclude that faculty listing changes were seeking to fine-tune the program rather than change it substantially.

Table 4

Faculty Opinion on Number of Distribution Courses, by Percentages

Opinions on Number of Courses	Campuses				
	North (%)	South (%)	Wolfson (%)	Medical (%)	All (%)
Should be increased	29.8	19.7	5.9	0	19.4
Should be decreased	4.3	22.5	5.9	16.7	14.8
Should remain the same	29.8	45.1	64.7	50.0	42.6
Cannot answer	36.1	12.7	23.5	33.3	23.2

Suggesting improvements. In open-ended responses to a question which asked faculty how they would like distribution courses changed, a number of faculty indicated that the College should provide some means other than the departmental credit-by-exam procedure to allow students who demonstrate proficiency in writing skills to start at a level in composition higher than Communications. Some faculty favored allowing those students who start at any level above Communications, and/or who demonstrate superior writing skills, to substitute a literature course for the third required composition course.

A second area singled out for change concerned the amount of influence faculty had on the selection of distribution courses. As seen in Table 5, faculty at Wolfson and Medical Center Campuses believed they had reasonable influence in distribution course selection. On the other hand, at the larger North and South Campuses, faculty felt that they had far less influence. The data suggest that faculty at the larger campuses felt more removed from the selection process. If this is actually the case, this feeling could ultimately affect the success of the entire General Education Program. The normal channels for voicing faculty opinion--the campus academic councils and Faculty Senates--did not seem to be regarded as open by many faculty at North and South Campuses, or faculty elected not to use these avenues available to them for voicing opinions. The study subcommittee thus believed that a further study is needed to determine whether the finding of perceived low influence is associated with faculty desire for a greater voice in selecting distribution courses.

Table 5

Perceived Faculty Influence on Selection of Distribution Courses

Faculty Ranking of Perceived Influence (1-10 Scale)	Campuses				
	North (%)	South (%)	Wolfson (%)	Medical (%)	All (%)
1 (lowest)	48.8	45.3	23.1	6.3	39.7
2	2.4	4.7	0	6.3	3.7
3	4.9	7.8	7.7	6.3	7.4
4	2.4	6.3	0	6.3	4.4
5	22.0	6.3	0	31.3	13.2
6	2.4	7.8	0	6.4	5.1
7	0	6.3	23.1	12.1	6.6
8	7.3	0	15.4	12.5	5.1
9	2.5	6.1	15.3	0	5.2
10 (highest)	7.3	9.4	15.4	12.5	9.6

The subcommittee was surprised that 30% of faculty respondents either left blank the open-ended questions concerning what courses should be added to, or dropped from, the current distribution list, or indicated that these concerns did not apply to them. It had been assumed that faculty would at least respond concerning their own discipline areas. That they did not, and that they further indicated that no distribution courses applied to them or their teaching, concerned the subcommittee. If all faculty are to be involved in advisement, it is essential that all should understand the connections within the three-tiered general education structure. Moreover, for the General Education Program to

succeed, all faculty should certainly be aware of matters affecting their own discipline areas. Therefore, the subcommittee concluded that the entire faculty should be surveyed to determine how many are, in fact, unfamiliar with the distribution portion of the General Education Program. The subcommittee also felt that further efforts should be made to acquaint all faculty, especially those in occupational areas, with the interrelationships between the General Education Program and other academic areas.

The subcommittee concluded that it might have surveyed the faculty more intensively than it did on the impact of the general education reforms on electives. Mixed results for the present study indicated that most faculty perceived few or no significant changes made by the implementation of the distribution program. For example, most surveyed faculty reported no major changes in their departmental offerings or personal teaching schedules. Yet some faculty commented that the new requirements were having an adverse effect on their ability to offer elective courses needed by majors. This discrepancy could have been caused by the wording of the former question. Though a department might have changed many of its course offerings, some faculty in the department could still have been teaching the same courses which they did before the changes, because they did not teach core courses. Similarly, in areas other than those addressed by the core courses, faculty might still have been teaching the same introductory courses as before. What the question did not measure was possible changes in elective offerings if students were to have fewer required courses. Uncertainty concerning this issue led the study subcommittee to recommend further investigation.

Assessing impact of external forces. Faculty expressed concern that recently required courses in English composition and mathematics would result in fewer electives for students. The requirement for a third composition course

(ENC 2301) elicited particular comments from a number of faculty. These responses confirmed a need for further investigation of the impact of the General Education Program on elective courses.

Another area of concern revealed by the study was the possibility of "political" decisions influencing distribution course lists. Faculty expressed skepticism concerning the general education utility and validity of some courses included on the distribution list. The College administration, by encouraging faculty to seek changes in the present system, has kept alive the possibility of change. However, this policy has also indirectly fostered periodic attempts by specific interest groups to have particular courses added to the distribution list, in hopes of increasing department enrollment figures, saving dying courses, or adding to the variety of teaching options.

Such considerations are outside the established criteria for placement of courses within the distribution group. The study subcommittee felt that selecting new courses for inclusion clearly should not be "political." Despite the above reservations raised by the impact of external forces, the subcommittee concluded that for most faculty there was little compelling need for significant change in the present distribution course program.

Student Findings

Students also displayed a high degree of satisfaction with the current system. In all, 760 returns were received from 1984 Spring and Fall student samples. Since results from the two surveys were generally the same, data were combined. The only exception was results relating to evening students. A question which asked students to indicate when they generally attended classes was inadvertently omitted from the Fall 1984 survey. Consequently, all conclusions pertaining to evening students are drawn from Spring data.

Meeting program goals and objectives. Data from the student surveys indicated that distribution course instructors presented the courses in accord with the philosophy of the General Education Program. For example, Table 6 shows how students believed their instructors had described the distribution courses. Student results roughly paralleled those of faculty (see Table 1) regarding the purposes of distribution courses. More than 74% of the students indicated that distribution courses were described as the faculty had described them. Further, as reported in Table 7, students indicated that faculty had presented the distribution courses as described. In other words, students thought that they had received realistic descriptions of distribution courses implementing, through course content and strategies, the College's goals and objectives for distribution courses.

Table 6

Student Responses on Nature of Description of Distribution Courses Supplied by Course Instructors

Instructors' Descriptions of Distribution Courses	Student Responses	
	Number	Percent
A survey course	249	32
An introduction to a sequence	316	41
An advanced course for majors	48	6
An advanced course for non-majors	45	5
Other descriptions	115	14
No response	12	2

Table 7

Student Agreement on Presentation of Distribution Courses as Described by Instructors

Response Options	Student Responses	
	Number	Percent
Agreement	610	80.3
Disagreement	37	4.9
Uncertain	93	12.2
No response	20	3.6

Students were also asked to rank a series of expectations about distribution courses. As shown in Table 8, most surveyed students (541, or 57%) indicated that they had expected either "a general introduction" or "specific background" for a major (i.e., a broad approach which would help them in their future work).

Table 8

Student Ranking of Expectations of Distribution Courses

Expectations	Student Responses	
	Number	Percent
A general introduction	259	27
Specific background needed to take more courses in a major	282	30
A continuation of the study of a specific discipline	172	18
Other responses	212	22
Unusable returns	35	3

Table 9 shows student responses to a question which asked whether the distribution courses had met their expectations. Since the Fall 1984 survey was administered early in the term, it was not surprising to see so many "uncertains" (15.5%). However, it is equally clear from the data that few (8.7%) were disappointed. The similarity of these data to the Spring results (obtained from students near the end of the course) suggests that an "uncertain" response would generally have become affirmative rather than negative. In sum, survey findings established that student expectations for distribution courses

corresponded to College criteria and that the students believed that their expectations were being met in practice.

Table 9

Student Responses to Whether Distribution Courses Had Met Their Expectations

Response Options	Student Responses	
	Number	Percent
Agreement	564	74.2
Disagreement	66	8.7
Uncertain	118	15.5
No response	25	1.6

Another student survey item recorded reasons for selecting distribution courses. These responses, reported in Table 10, confirmed that the primary reasons why most students had elected to enroll in some distribution courses rather than others were that the courses were required for their major or that counselors had advised them to do so. The conclusion that practicality governed their choices was reinforced by the low responses (10%) to the third option. Although a course might have sounded interesting, its course description was not enough to attract large enrollment.

Table 10

Reasons Cited by Students for Selecting Distribution Courses

Reasons for Course Selection	Student Responses	
	Number	Percent
It was required for my program	428	58
My counselor advised me to enroll	120	15
It sounded interesting	75	10
The time was convenient	24	3
It was recommended by a friend	10	1
I liked the instructor teaching it	4	1
The place was convenient	2	.3
The course was said to be easy	1	0
Other	29	4
No response	54	7.7

The student survey data further indicated general student satisfaction with the distribution courses offered at the College. Most students (64%) believed present distribution courses would meet their career needs, 69% thought these courses would give them greater understanding and enjoyment of the world in which they lived, and 65% felt they had enough options in scheduling of distributions to meet their needs.

Measuring effectiveness. The subcommittee found no evidence that most students would register at another campus for distribution courses not available on their own campuses. As Table 11 indicates, most students (87%) had not taken a distribution course on another campus. Most were probably inclined to wait

until a particular course was available at their home campus or take another distribution course in that area rather than go to another campus.

Table 11

Student Responses on Intercampus Enrollment in Distribution Courses

Response Options	Student Responses	
	Number	Percent
Had registered at another campus	72	9.4
Had not registered at another campus	661	87.0
Uncertain	6	1.0
No response	34	2.6

Data from the Spring 1984 student sample analyzed by day and evening student responses indicated that 23% of evening students at the Wolfson and Medical Center Campuses--more than twice the collegewide average of 10%--had gone off-campus to register for desired distribution courses. This suggests the need for an increase in evening offerings at the Wolfson and Medical Center Campuses. However, since the question which asked students when they generally took classes was omitted from the Fall 1984 survey, these data may be characteristic only of a spring term, when fewer courses are offered in all areas. Moreover, though more evening than day students went to other campuses to take distribution courses, their number was still less than a quarter of those who might have done so. Accordingly, campus location appears more important than courses offered.

Responses from Spring 1984 student surveys further indicated that students seldom dropped the most popular courses. Students withdrew from distribution courses primarily to preserve their grade point averages. Positive student responses to the second most frequently cited reason, "I didn't have time to study," also supported the idea that they dropped to avoid lowering their grade point averages. While having too little time to study of course makes it difficult to keep up with assignments and increases the likelihood of poor grades, the number of respondents was too small to draw definite conclusions. Data indicated only that certain courses drew more students and retained them. Other reasons for withdrawal varied from course to course. The two most frequently cited were "I didn't like the method of presentation," and "My work schedule changed." However, it is invalid to draw conclusions from such small numbers (14 and 9, respectively).

Table 12 presents responses from Spring 1984 students who were asked why they had not chosen the distribution courses in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences that had the lowest enrollments. The study subcommittee included a distribution course from each of the three academic areas; each course had failed to attract a single student at the campus where the survey was administered. Data from the Fall 1984 survey across the data base was unavailable because the day/evening question was omitted.

Table 12

Reasons for Not Registering for Distribution Courses in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences That Had the Lowest Enrollments at a Particular Campus

Most Cited Reasons for Not Registering	Student Response	
	Number	Percent
I have completed all my requirements in this discipline	167	15
The topic didn't interest me	231	21
Other students told me it was hard	2	0.3
My advisor did not recommend it	42	4
It didn't fit my schedule	83	7
It wasn't available on my home campus	7	0.7
It isn't required for my major	281	25
Other	203	19
No response	94	8

As Table 12 reveals, the highest number of students (25%) responded that the course was not required for their majors. Other often chosen reasons were that the topic was not interesting (21%) and that they had already completed requirements in that particular area (15%). Scheduling difficulties also influenced 7% of students not to register for seldom-chosen distribution courses. Again, practicality overrode most considerations other than lack of interest.

The study subcommittee further tried to measure the effectiveness of distribution courses by determining student opinions concerning sequencing of distribution courses and core courses. Results shown on Table 13 indicated that

most students (45%) believed that the core courses could be taken simultaneously with corresponding distribution courses, although many (32%) still strongly supported taking the core course first. Few (1%) believed the core course should be taken after the corresponding distribution course.

Table 13

Student Responses on Sequencing of Core Courses and Distribution Courses

Response Options	Student Response	
	Number	Percent
Core course must be taken first	244	32
Core course can be taken simultaneously with distribution course	344	45
Core course can be taken only after distribution course	11	1
Uncertain	143	19
No response	26	3

When the same issue regarding the sequencing core and distribution courses was asked in relation to each core course, results proved interesting. Data from Table 14 (combined with the conclusion drawn from Table 13, that few students supported taking core courses after corresponding distribution courses) show overwhelming support for taking composition and mathematics courses, which emphasize basic skills, in prescribed sequence (68% and 69% of respondents, respectively). The data concerning the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences are less clear. Only 53%, 56%, and 53%, respectively, thought it necessary to take the core course first to succeed in the corresponding

distribution course. In fact, approximately 34% of humanities students, 31% of social science students, and 28% of natural science students felt that distribution courses could be taken with corresponding core courses and students could still succeed in distribution courses.

Table 14

Student Responses on Sequencing of Core Courses Before Corresponding Distribution Courses

Academic Areas	Student Responses (N = 773)			
	Necessary to Take Core Course First		Uncertain	No Response
	Yes (%)	No (%)	(%)	(%)
Composition	68	14	15	3
Humanities	53	34	10	3
Social sciences	56	31	10	3
Natural sciences	53	28	15	4
Mathematics	69	16	12	3

Further analysis of the sequencing issue came from responses to open-ended items. A small number of students (about 10%) expressed very strong negative comments concerning both the need for humanities courses in general and the lack of logical flow that they perceived from the Humanities core course to the distribution courses in the humanities. The intensity of these comments, more than their number, was significant. The study subcommittee suggests that humanities instructors make increased efforts to clarify the relationships of course material to other general education areas, so that students will have better perspective on the place of the humanities in their education and lives.

When the course in Spanish for Native Speakers (SPN 2340) was included in distribution electives, some humanities faculty members suspected that this humanities option would be used by the College's predominant population of Hispanic students to avoid enrollment in other humanities distribution courses. That this did not happen is suggested by Table 15, though data are confined to the Wolfson Campus. Hispanic students' choice of SPN 2340 as a distribution course at that campus was governed by the same reasons that influenced all other student selection—viz., whether the course was required for a major, and, much less significantly, interest in the subject.

Table 15

Wolfson Campus Student Registration in the Spanish for Native Speakers Course

Response Options	Student Responses	
	Number	Percent
Registered in the course	1	2.04
Did not register in the course	47	95.92
Uncertain	1	2.04

Suggesting improvements. Data concerning student opinions about the number of distribution options available to them showed mixed results. Table 16 indicates that students in Spring and Fall 1984 overwhelmingly answered affirmatively when asked whether, in general, there were enough options in the distribution areas to meet their needs.

Table 16

Student Agreement/Disagreement on Whether the Number of Distribution Course Options Is Sufficient to Meet Student Needs

Response Options	Student Responses	
	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	131	17
Agree	363	47
Undecided	108	14
Disagree	107	14
Strongly disagree	29	3
No response	35	5

However, when students were asked to evaluate options available in each distribution area, over 40% of respondents called for more options. Study results reported in Table 17 appear to indicate that many students, while satisfied that the courses offered were sufficient to fulfill requirements, desired some additional options, but gave no clear ideas of these. Open-ended questions asking students what courses should be added generated a myriad of responses listing personal interest courses but lacking consensus. Further, students overwhelmingly responded that no courses should be deleted because such courses might be needed by other students, even if they were not particularly interested in them.

Table 17

Student Opinions Concerning the Necessity of Adding More Distribution Options, by Percentages

Academic Areas	More Courses Necessary (%)	More Courses Unnecessary (%)	Uncertain (%)	No Response (%)
Composition	45	37	14	4
Humanities	38	45	13	4
Natural sciences	40	40	17	3
Social sciences	42	37	17	4
Mathematics	43	38	15	4

Assessing the impact of outside forces. Considering the demographic characteristics of students and the fact that so many hold full-time jobs, it was not surprising that about one-fourth desired more options in scheduling distribution classes. However, surprisingly, day and evening students did not markedly differ on this issue.

In fact, data from only the Spring 1984 survey (Fall data across the data base was unavailable as the day/evening question was omitted from the Fall survey) indicated that evening students were not notably different from day students on many issues. The views of surveyed evening students diverged from those of day students on three issues. First, evening students expressed a desire for the scheduling of more distribution courses, especially at the Wolfson and Medical Center Campuses. Second, many evening students indicated that they had traveled to another campus to take particular distribution

courses. Third, more evening than day students could not decide whether required core courses should be taken before the corresponding distribution courses. Further analysis of data revealed that for both general and specific choices, three to four times more evening than day students consistently listed themselves as "undecided."

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROJECTIONS

The following recommendations and projections represent the conclusions of the Distribution/Elective Courses Subcommittee after studying and analyzing data from all sources. The recommendations are grouped under the headings of meeting goals and objectives, measuring effectiveness, suggesting improvements, and assessing the impacts of outside forces (i.e., the study's four general evaluation areas, based on the four major study goals and questions), with the first recommendation in each area being the most important.

Meeting of Goals and Objectives

Recommendation 1. The present distribution list should remain basically as it is.

This recommendation reflects the overwhelming acceptance of the present system by both faculty and students. The College will maintain its present distribution list.

Recommendation 2. The College should move with caution when considering additions to, or deletions from, the current collegewide distribution list.

This recommendation complements Recommendation 1 and is viewed by the study subcommittee as very important. Any changes in the current distribution list will be carefully studied before being implemented, and faculty will be apprised of proposed changes and given opportunity to study and react to them. This process will occur first through campus departments, then through academic councils, and finally at a general meeting of the collegewide Academic Affairs Committee (AAC). As this will be an on-going process, regular times will be scheduled for considering changes in the distribution course list.

Recommendation 3. The College should survey faculty to determine how the new General Education Program has affected the offering of electives.

It is important to determine with some certainty how the distribution courses and the newly required composition and mathematics courses have affected the offerings of elective courses. To accomplish that, a collegewide general education committee will be established, consisting of faculty from both the arts and sciences, and occupational areas. This committee will be established early in Fall 1985 (1985-1). By the end of the 1986 Winter Term (1985-2), this committee will study the impacts of the General Education Program on the offering of electives, and will administer that survey to all faculty. During Spring 1986 (1985-3), the committee will report results and make recommendations to be submitted to the AAC for action. Copies of the report will be sent to all faculty members.

Measuring Effectiveness

Recommendation 4. The College should determine why some students feel that the Humanities core course is not a direct preparation for the distribution courses in the humanities.

Data from open-ended responses on student surveys showed that students had difficulty perceiving a logical flow from the Humanities core course to the distribution courses in that area. The College will address this problem and work to correct its causes. To accomplish this, the College will establish a collegewide task force consisting of faculty from within and outside the humanities, to investigate this problem. This task force will be established early in Fall 1985 (1985-1), and will complete its work by the end of Winter

1986 (1985-2), when it will report its findings and recommendations to the AAC for review.

Recommendation 5. Humanities core course instructors should make a greater effort to demonstrate to students the relationships of the Humanities core course to the distribution courses in the humanities.

This recommendation addresses the fact that nearly half of respondents thought it was possible to take distribution courses in the humanities prior to the Humanities core course and still have a good chance for success in the former. Faculty members teaching distribution courses in the humanities will meet on each campus during Fall 1985 (1985-1) to identify the learning in the core course that is essential for success in the distribution courses. From these campus lists, a general collegewide list of essential learning elements will be developed and made ready for distribution by the end of Fall 1985 (1985-1). Starting in Winter 1986 (1985-2), humanities faculty will distribute this list to, and discuss it with, humanities students.

Recommendation 6. Humanities instructors should make a greater effort to demonstrate to students the position of the humanities within the General Education Program.

This recommendation seeks to resolve the problem of students who did not understand why they should be required to take any classes in the humanities. A process similar to that suggested in Recommendation 5 will be initiated, to show how the humanities fit into the overall General Education Program. Humanities faculty members will meet on each campus during Fall 1985 (1985-1) to list the ways in which the humanities fit into the General Education Program. From these campus lists, a collegewide list will be developed and made ready for

distribution by the end of Fall 1985 (1985-1). The list will be distributed to students and discussed with them in Winter 1986 (1985-2).

Recommendation 7. The College should develop advanced placement and exemption procedures, other than departmental credit-by-examination, to allow students who demonstrate proficiency to start a higher level in the nine-credit required composition sequence.

An urgent need is addressed in this recommendation. Current practices make it impossible for most students to be exempted from a writing course. Consequently, some students with superior preparation in this area take a course they do not need. Therefore, the AAC will appoint a task force to draw up a plan for advanced placement which will allow students who demonstrate proficiency in writing to start at a higher level than the Communications core course. The general guidelines of this plan will be similar to those used to move students from one level to another in developmental courses. Faculty asked to implement this procedure will be given opportunity to react to the guidelines prior to their implementation. Faculty will be then be trained to implement the advanced placement plan. If this implementation entails extra work, faculty will be given additional compensation. This plan will be ready for AAC review by August 1986, the end of the 1985-86 academic year.

Recommendation 8. The College should allow students who demonstrate superior writing skills to substitute literature courses for one or more of their required composition courses.

This recommendation complements Recommendation 7. This item will receive high priority in order to strengthen the place of literature in the General Education Program. Miami-Dade has attracted a number of superior students

through its Emphasis on Excellence and College Honors programs. Many of these have found the required composition sequence to contain unnecessary repetition. In addition, because of the present methods for selecting distribution courses, it is possible for such students to graduate from the College with little instruction in literature. Having knowledge in this field has been a hallmark of a general education. Therefore, a task force identified by the AAC will devise a procedure for students with demonstrated superior writing skills to substitute literature courses for one or more of their required composition courses. This plan will be part of the report called for in Recommendation 7. This procedure will also be ready for AAC review by August 1986.

Other Improvements

Recommendation 9. The College should investigate the need to schedule more distribution courses in the evening hours at the Wolfson and Medical Center Campuses.

Evening students at the Wolfson and Medical Center Campuses expressed, in the Spring 1984 survey, the need for a greater selection of distribution courses in evening hours. Since the question that identified when students took most of their classes was inadvertently omitted from the Fall 1984 survey, the subcommittee was uncertain whether the concern raised by respondents was a problem unique to a short term or an indication of a general problem for evening students attending Wolfson and Medical Center Campuses. Therefore, a study of the needs of evening students will be conducted during Spring/Summer Terms of 1985 (1984-3/4), and repeated in the Fall Term of 1985 (1985-1), to determine whether changes are needed. Both campuses will establish committees to study this issue. Should it prove that students at these campuses need more options, the College administration will consider practical and cost-effective means to

address these needs.

Recommendation 10. Faculty should be surveyed to determine whether they desire greater influence in the selection of distribution courses on the collegewide list.

Data from faculty surveys revealed a discrepancy in faculty responses concerning the amount of influence they felt they had in altering the current distribution list. Since a large number of faculty at the North and South Campuses felt that they had had little influence on the makeup of the list, the subcommittee believed it important to determine whether faculty desire greater influence in selection. Study results also suggested a possible problem in the current process of using Faculty Senate representatives on the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) to convey faculty sentiments on academic matters. To clarify this issue, faculty will be surveyed to determine whether they desire a greater role in the choice of distribution list selections and what form they would prefer their role to take. This study will occur before significant action in changing the current list is taken. A means will be provided to give faculty a greater role distribution course selection if a large number indicate desire for greater participation. This action will be completed and a process implemented by the end of the 1985 Fall Term (1985-1).

Recommendation 11. Any future surveys related to faculty attitudes toward the distribution courses will be given to the entire faculty.

This recommendation addresses the sense of uncertainty caused by receiving study returns from only one-sixth of the faculty. While some faculty may be reluctant to voice unpopular opinions in an AAC open meeting or even to the Faculty Senate because of concern for possible consequences, anonymous surveys

consider adding courses to the current distribution list at its next open meeting in April 1985. To that end, a general list of suggested additions was drawn up, and faculty were invited to submit further suggestions for addition. All of the responses were returned to the individual campuses for review by campus academic councils. Those courses that received the support of all of these committees are more likely to be added. The AAC, however, agreed to wait for results of the College's self-study so that recommendations thereof could also be considered.

Actions of the AAC leading to the addition of large numbers of courses could challenge the concept of a three-tiered general education system. On the other hand, addition of few courses or none would reaffirm the original College criteria for distribution courses.

In the opinion of the Distribution/Elective Courses Subcommittee, the AAC action, described above, to allow concurrent enrollment of core and distribution courses in some areas, needs to be reconsidered, since it represents a change from original College distribution course criteria. Further, expanding the distribution course list implies a belief that in some areas, students do not receive a sufficiently thorough introduction to basic terminology and ways of acquiring knowledge, to allow them to complete more advanced disciplinary work successfully. Adoption of a more discipline-oriented approach to general education at Miami-Dade could lead to the demise of the three-tiered system.

are effective in providing faculty with opportunity to identify areas of dissatisfaction, without such concern. Therefore, before significant changes in the present portion of the General Education Program are made, the College will survey full-time faculty, as well as a representative group of part-time faculty, about the proposed changes, sufficiently in advance of decision-making to take faculty views into account.

Recommendation 12. <u>There should be increased education of faculty who do not teach distribution courses to make them aware of the functions of the distribution courses in the General Education Program. The College should require faculty to attend particular information sessions to ensure that they are exposed to needed information.</u>

About 30% of faculty who returned completed surveys indicated either that they did not have enough experience to suggest alternatives to the current distribution list or that it did not apply to them. Therefore, the College will provide faculty who do not directly teach distribution courses, including librarians, counselors, and advisors, with information concerning how they fit into the overall general education plan, and how their roles affect the general education options available to students. This educational program for faculty will consist of both written communications and special workshops, based on a survey of what faculty need to know.

Independent of the College's 1984 self-study, changes in the original distribution course program have occurred, or will occur. At its Fall 1984 open meeting, the AAC voted to allow students to enroll in a distribution course concurrently with the core course in the same area (excluding composition and mathematics, which remain sequential). The AAC also indicated that it would

ABSTRACT

Underlying Miami-Dade's reforms in the areas of basic skills, general education, and academic support systems is a student flow model that monitors student progress through the College's educational system. Ideal "flow," then, is the orderly movement from general education core courses, through distribution and elective courses, to graduation. In the broadest sense, the student flow model includes recruitment, entry and exit assessment, placement in appropriate programs and courses, monitoring progress through graduation, and facilitating exit from the College to upper-level institutions, employment, or other pursuits.

The study goals of the Student Flow Subcommittee were (1) to determine the effectiveness of the College's student flow model, (2) to contrast the ideal flow model with actual student flow patterns, (3) to determine the relationship between ethnic distributions and the ability of student subgroups to move through the system, and (4) to examine the effects on program requirements, established by the student flow model, on enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.

The subcommittee included District professionals and collegewide representation from faculty and administrators. As part of its research, the subcommittee reviewed abstracts of the College's Institutional Research studies concerning student flow. It also compared student grade transcripts of a 20% sample of graduates at the end of the 1980 Winter Term (1979-2), with a corresponding sample from the end of the 1984 Winter Term (1983-2). Those years were selected to represent the last graduating class not affected, and the first class that was affected, by the College's general education reforms. Items selected for comparative analysis included total number of credits needed for

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND CURRICULUM REFORMS

PART 3

STUDENT FLOW

MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

1984 INSTITUTIONAL SELF-STUDY

graduation, grade point average differences, numbers of withdrawals, average numbers of withdrawals per student, and numbers of courses passed by means of the College Level Examination Program (CLEP).

To determine the effectiveness of the student flow model, the subcommittee analysed the ideal and actual flow patterns in regard to the relationship between assessment and placement, and grades earned in mathematics and core courses—Communications, The Social Environment, Humanities, Energy in the Natural Environment, and The Individual in Transition. This section of the study established two major findings: for most students, there was a direct relationship between entry assessment and placement, and success in the classes described; and there was no apparent difference between the ideal student flow model and actual student flow. Therefore the student flow model should not be changed to any great degree. Accordingly, assessment should be continued, and students should follow placement prescriptions.

However, two significant variations from the primary flow patterns were found. First were noncorrespondences between student grades and passing rates on the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST). The subcommittee recommended collegewide exit competency examinations for each required general education composition course.

A second major variation from the primary student flow patterns--discovered when the subcommittee examined the relationship between ethnic distributions and the abilities of the subgroups to move through the system—was the decline in program completion rates for Black non-Hispanic students. In this area, the subcommittee proposed two recommendations: that the College continue to study the impact of basic academic skills assessment on minorities; and that the College further investigate why suspended Black non-Hispanic students have lower re-enrollment and completion rates than other ethnic groups.

The subcommittee's investigation of the effects of student flow requirements on retention revealed a decline in Associate in Science enrollment and graduation rates. In this respect, the subcommittee recommended that the College study the reasons for the decline and assess the attitudes of the employer community toward Miami-Dade graduates.

BACKGROUND

During the 1960s and early 1970s, students in many institutions across the nation gained a greater voice in decision-making concerning admissions standards. Parallel growth in community colleges with open admissions policies provided access to new groups of students. The result was increased diversity in the student body. A second major change has been increased numbers of older students, attributable both to changing demographics and open admissions. Finally, a decline in academic skills at every level of education, together with open admissions, may have contributed to higher percentages of entering students with basic deficiencies. These and other national trends affecting general education are discussed in the Introduction to this volume.

Miami-Dade Community College has a diverse student population comprised primarily of American Hispanics, Black non-Hispanics, and White non-Hispanics, but also including many international students and other minority groups. A substantial number (35%) of all Miami-Dade students are in the 25-44 age group (Wright and Mannchen, 1984). The large enrollment of entering students with deficiencies in basic skills can thus be attributed to changes in the population of Dade County, with its increased numbers of refugees, minorities, and adults in the 25-44 range, as well as to the same national trends outlined above.

College Reforms in General Education

The Miami-Dade 1974 self-study indicated that the majority of students and faculty felt dissatisfied with the general education curriculum then in place; it did not seem to fit the needs of the diverse student body. As a result of the 1974 self-study's recommendations concerning general education, both faculty and administration realized that modifications in educational directions and academic programs were necessary to meet the needs of the rapidly changing

community.

Accordingly, Miami-Dade reviewed and revised its requirements and offerings in three main areas: (1) basic skills; (2) general education; and (3) academic support systems. Results of the latter were the Standards of Academic Progress (SOAP), the Advisement and Graduation System (AGIS), and the Academic Alert system. Comprehensive studies of the reforms in the first area are contained in Volume II, and, of the third area, in Volume IV. The relationships among these three areas are discussed in the Introduction to the present volume, along with history of General Education programs at Miami-Dade, and the 1974 self-study recommendations and observations pertinent to general education.

One thrust of the College's educational reforms was to be supportive of student needs, "to help all students succeed by giving them special assistance early in their programs when they are having academic difficulties, by designing new courses that have an abundance of supporting materials, and by giving them sound advice concerning their career and educational goals" (Lukenbill and McCabe, 1978, p. 9). Miami-Dade's educational reforms thus also meant that the College became more directive regarding the academic choices available to students. Underlying the basic assessment, advisement, developmental, general education, and academic support programs has been a belief that "more assessment of individual skills and talent, and more monitoring and follow-up were needed to enhance student success" (Kelly, April 1981, p.2). Therefore, part of the College's comprehensive general education reforms included a system with greater controls as well as increased provisions for assistance (i.e., asssessment, advisement, monitoring, prescription) for students experiencing difficulty. What emerged from this new system was a student flow model that ideally allows students to realize their maximum potential as they progress through their academic programs from entry to graduation.

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Definition of Student Flow and Rationale for Study

Student flow, then, is the movement of degree-seeking students through the College's educational system from the time they enter Miami-Dade until they leave or graduate. In the broadest sense, it includes recruiting students; assessing basic academic skills at both entry and exit; placing students in appropriate programs and courses; determining their readiness for the General Education Program; monitoring progress to degree objectives; and facilitating exit from the College and transition to upper-level institutions, employment, or other pursuits. Since the General Education Program was designed as a three-tiered educational system, ideal flow for Associate in Arts (A.A.) students would be a smooth passage from the first tier (core courses), through the second (distribution courses) and the third (elective courses), to graduation. Since much of the success of the three-tiered General Education Program depends upon students' smooth passage through this three-tiered system, ideal and actual student flow through the program is the primary subject of this study. Studies of the three-tiered General Education Program are the subjects of the first two reports in this volume.

Operation and Administration of the Student Flow Model

Overall, development committees, steering committees, and, in particular, the collegewide Student Services Committee and the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) have had the tasks of developing, implementing, regulating, and refining the College's student flow model. To ensure that the ideal student flow model is preserved, the Student Services Committee and AAC have monitored the work of other committees and acted as a regulator of student flow patterns so that students can progress satisfactorily through the system.

Most important, a system of checks and balances was built into the student flow model to regulate the student's entry, passage, and eventual exit from the College. With few exceptions, all entering degree-seeking students are assessed and, depending on their readiness, directed to appropriate courses and programs--honors, developmental, English as a second language (ESL), or the three-tiered general education system. The development of computer technology has allowed the College to enforce these placement decisions and to introduce three computer systems (AGIS, SOAP, and Academic Alert) to advise, direct, and monitor students in their progress through the system toward degree objectives. Computer "holds" ideally prevent students with deficiencies from registering in the core courses and lock them into needed developmental and ESL courses. Allowing only those who satisfactorily complete these courses to enter the core courses is another check. Computer locks also force students to register for an English course by the time they complete fifteen credits. Passing the state-mandated College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) is now necessary for A.A. students to exit from the College; thus another check in the student flow model may be the mid-CLAST, a preview test which assesses student progress toward the CLAST competencies--language arts and computational.

Thus the student flow model (see Figure 3 in the volume Introduction) shapes a General Education Program with less flexibility, fewer choices, and more directive control than was the case before the general education reforms were implemented.

CONDUCTING THE STUDY

Review of prior data. Since the student flow model greatly affects the General Education Program, the 1984 self-study of general education at Miami-Dade provided a timely and appropriate opportunity to evaluate student flow. The Student Flow Subcommittee, comprised of faculty and staff with expressed interests, diverse backgrounds, and wide experience in general education, first defined the term "student flow." Next, after reviewing report abstracts from the College's Office of Institutional Research related to enrollment, retention, and graduation rates from 1975 to 1984, the subcommittee decided to use only those abstracts reporting data from the years 1982-84, the years after the General Education Program was fully implemented. The abstracts used in the study are listed in this volume's references. The main topics emerging from the abstracts review were basic academic skills assessment, ethnic enrollment, retention, performance on CLAST, and graduation rates.

Generation of new data. Subcommittee members further proposed a comparative analysis of the grade transcripts of students graduating following the Winter terms of 1980 and 1984. Those specific years were chosen for comparison because the subcommittee identified the Winter 1980 class as the last to graduate before the implementation of the general education reforms, and the Winter 1984 class as the first graduating class affected by all of the reforms. The subcommittee therefore obtained transcripts for 20% of the students who graduated following the Winter terms of 1980 and 1984, to determine which of the observed changes--numbers of credits needed for graduation, grade point averages, withdrawals, and courses passed through the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), including the percentages of core courses passed in this way--might be attributed to new requirements in the student flow model.

Other sources of data supplementing those found by the subcommittee in its review of Institutional Research (IR) abstracts and the comparative analysis of student transcripts were (1) interviews with appropriate College administrators; (2) responses by students and faculty to particular questions developed by the subcommittee and included in surveys conducted by the Distribution Courses Subcommittee; and (3) transcribed open-ended responses to a questionnaire administered to September 1984 CLAST examinees and to 1982-84 Miami-Dade graduates by the collegewide Self-Study Coordination Committee (SSCC). Details concerning the latter may be found in Volume I.

Formulating Study Goals

Using the data from the review of IR abstracts, the comparative analysis of student transcripts, and information from interviews and write-in responses from the surveys, the subcommittee identified twenty-four investigatory questions (listed in the separate report annex) relating to four evaluation areas: basic academic skills assessment and academic progress through the system (including CLAST); enrollment and retention; performance and evaluation of faculty; and graduation and exit from the College. These questions then became study objectives grouped under four major study goals: (1) to determine the effectiveness of the College's present student flow model; (2) to contrast the ideal student flow model with actual student flow patterns; (3) to determine the relationship between ethnic distributions of first-time-in-college students and their abilities to move through the educational system; and (4) to determine the effects of requirements in the student flow model on program requirements, retention, and graduation rates.

From the data and information from interviews and write-in responses described above, the Student Flow Subcommittee drew its conclusions concerning

the impact of the student flow model on the General Education Program, and developed the thirty-five recommendations, presented at the end of this report, for maintaining and refining this model.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The study of student flow suggested that most students moved smoothly through the General Education Program in the patterns prescribed by the College's student flow model. However, the students who did not follow the usual flow patterns also concerned the subcommittee. Variations from primary flow patterns indicated that further study would be appropriate in particular areas—either to facilitate movement toward degree objectives and exit from the College, or to prescribe or recommend other appropriate action.

Determining Effects of the Student Flow Model on Students

An important subcommittee task was determining which of many changes in student data, indicated by prior IR studies and also observed in the comparative analysis of student transcripts, could be attributed to application of the student flow model. The subcommittee could find no relationship, for example, between movement of students through the system and the fact that the ratios of males to females changed from 40/60 in Fall 1979, to 46/54 in Fall 1980, to 43/57 in Fall 1984 (Wright, 1983a).

Part- and full-time enrollments. Data on part- and full-time enrollment (with full-time defined here as 12 credits or more) of first-time-in-college students at particular campuses in a study conducted by IR (Wright, 1983a) revealed noteworthy differences in student populations. The percentages of full-time students at South Campus, always a majority, increased steadily for the last four of the five fall terms between 1980 and 1984. North Campus ratios of full- to part-time students were 50/50 for the years 1980-81; the percentage of full-time students increased to 58.3% in 1982, then leveled off. At the Medical Center Campus, percentages of full-time students, though always a

minority, increased steadily from 19.1% in Fall 1978 to 44.4% in Fall 1981, then dropped to 23.6% in Fall 1982 because of a corresponding increase in numbers of part-time students. At the Mitchell Wolfson New World Center Campus, part-time students have continued to be the majority for four out of the five fall terms from 1981 to 1984.

Obviously, then, the profiles for each campus are different. South Campus is predominantly full-time, Medical Center Campus is predominantly part-time, North Campus has a 60/40 ratio of full- to part-time students, and Wolfson Campus has somewhat more part-time than full-time students. Although these data have quite important implications for recruitment, enrollment, advisement, assessment, monitoring, retention, and graduation--thus causing variant strategies to be employed at the four campuses to apply the same student flow model--differences from campus to campus seem not to have been caused by application of the student flow model, since the proportions of part-time and full-time students collegewide have remained stable. It may be, however, that there are connections across the data base which further study would reveal.

Average number of credits. The study subcommittee expected that the application of the ideal student flow model had increased the average number of credits taken, since more students have been directed to developmental reading, writing, and mathematics courses. The results of the subcommittee's comparative analysis of average number of credits by campus are shown in Table 1. There did not seem to be any significant differences in the average numbers of credits on each campus from the last graduating class not affected by the educational reforms (Winter 1980) to the first graduating class affected (Winter 1984). Because of its particular program requirements, Medical Center continues to have a substantially higher number of required credits than other campuses. In fact, the numbers of credits declined slightly on each campus. Further study might

show that different ways of counting developmental credits or other factors affected these data.

Table 1

Comparative Analysis of Average Numbers of Credits by Campus, Winter Terms, 1980 and 1984, For a 20% Sample

Campus	Average Numbers of Credits by Campus		
	1980 Graduates	1984 Graduates	Differences
South	71.0	70.8	-0.2
North	75.4	70.5	-4.9
Wolfson	72.5	71.0	-1.5
Medical Center	97.3	91.5	-5.8

The Ideal Student Flow Model and Entry to General Education

The study subcommittee examined the effectiveness of the student flow model in assessment and placement for all students. Data were limited to mathematics, communications, and core courses.

Entry assessment and the predictability of success in coursework. A major goal of the assessment and placement program at Miami-Dade has been to determine which students are "ready" for core and elective coursework. By definition, "readiness" translates into successful performance in courses. Ideally, a placement mechanism places students in courses and programs where all can progress. To the extent that a placement mechanism lives up to this expectation and a student performs as expected, it is valid and is credited with a success or "hit." In other words, a success or "hit" occurs when a student scores above

a placement criterion and predictably performs successfully in a course, or when a student scores below the placement criterion and predictably performs poorly in a course. By computing the proportions of hits to misses, the accuracy, or success rate, of the placement mechanism can be evaluated.

Readiness in communications and mathematics. A study was conducted by the Office of Institutional Research to determine frequency of correct placement by entry assessment in the Fall Terms of 1981-84 (Davis,1984). The results were restricted to the 6,131 first-time-in-college students who had taken the Comparative Guidance and Placement Test (CGP) prior to each fall term from 1981 to 1984 and who were enrolled in at least one course that term. Data indicate that the Written Expression in English portion of the CGP produced a nearly 75% success rate, with a high of 79% accuracy in Fall 1982. The computation portion of the CGP, which had a success rate of about 68%, ranged from being 60% accurate in Fall 1983 to 75% accurate in Fall 1981. (Variations in success rates could be caused by variations in assessment or advisement procedures. These and other factors might be discovered in further research, should there be need.) Thus students following the ideal flow model--i.e., completing the communications and mathematics courses in which they were placed by entry assessment--had a greater probability of success in composition courses, including the Communications core course, and in required mathematics courses. Therefore the study subcommittee concluded that students should follow entry assessment prescriptions in communications and mathematics.

Readiness in core courses other than Communications. Determining readiness for the remaining general education core courses--i.e., Humanities (HUM 1020), The Social Environment (SSI 1120), The Individual in Transition (PSY 1000), and Energy in the Natural Environment (PSC 1515)--has also been a goal of the ideal student flow model. Determining readiness for core courses has been

accomplished by using reading criteria and scores on the reading portion of the CGP.

Data reported in Table 2 correlate first-time-in-college students' reading scores with grades earned in Humanities, The Social Environment, The Individual in Transition, and Energy in the Natural Environment (Davis, 1984). Three ranges in cutoff scores on the reading portion of the CGP were used as placement criteria: (1) students scoring at or above a raw score of 19 were able to enroll in core courses, (2) students scoring in the 11-18 range were able to enroll in these four core courses but were strongly advised to take a developmental reading course, and (3) students scoring below 11 were locked out of core courses and assigned a prescribed program including developmental reading. Of all 5,539 surveyed enrollees in the four core courses, 71% fell in the highest range of reading scores, 25% in the middle range, and a surprising 4%, who had somehow managed to avoid being locked out of the four core courses, in the lowest range.

A comparison across the four core courses shows in which courses the placement mechanism seemed to have the greatest validity. The success rates in Table 2, for all students enrolled in Humanities, indicate that 68% of those in the highest range of reading scores attained a grade of C or higher, thus indicating a validity of 68% for the reading criterion as a placement mechanism. Students in the middle range of scores were those "strongly advised" to take developmental reading. Predictably, only 59% attained a grade of C or higher. There seems to be a direct connection between the level of reading in Humanities and the grade attained, for the probability of success decreased as the reading score decreased. Those scoring in the lowest range of reading scores passed HUM 1020 barely half (51%) of the time.

Table 2

Grade Distribution in Percentages for Four Core Courses by Three Score Ranges Used as Reading Criteria on the Reading Portion of the Comparative Guidance and Placement Test (CGP)

Course Grades Received	CGP Reading Score Ranges											
	1-10				11-18				19-35			
	Core Courses				Core Courses				Core Courses			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	(%)				(%)				(%)			
A, B, C	51	44	47	33	59	53	65	48	68	65	73	64
D,F	28	22	34	33	21	27	19	23	19	19	15	17
Incomplete	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0
Withdrawal	21	32	19	33	19	20	15	29	13	15	11	19

	Total			
	Core Courses			
	1	2	3	4
	(%)			
A, B, C	65	62	69	60
D,F	20	21	17	19
Incomplete	0	1	0	0
Withdrawal	15	16	13	21

Key: 1 = Humanities
2 = The Social Environment
3 = The Individual in Transition
4 = Energy in the Natural Environment

Enrollees in The Social Environment had a more difficult time with the course than did those in Humanities. Students who passed this course included only 44% of those students in the lowest-scoring range, as compared with 51% in Humanities; 53% in the middle range, as compared with 59% in Humanities; and 65% in the highest range, as compared with 68% in Humanities.

For those enrolled in The Individual in Transition, the results were somewhat different. Predictably, of those scoring in the lowest range, 47% achieved a C or higher, thus in line with the 44% in The Social Environment and the 51% in Humanities. Further, of those students scoring in the highest range, a slight increase (to 73%) received a C or higher, which was still not

statistically significant in comparison with the 65% passing The Social Environment and the 68% passing Humanities. However, the enrollees scoring in the middle range had a statistically significant higher success rate of 65%, thus lowering the validity of the reading criteria for predicting success, since they had been "strongly advised" to take a developmental course. Since course content in The Individual in Transition has many experiential components, reading may be less essential in this course than in other core courses.

On the other hand, for enrollees in Energy in the Natural Environment, the reading criteria had greater validity for predicting success, possibly because of the difficulty of reading materials. Only 33% of the lowest-scoring group was able to achieve a C or higher (as compared to 51% in Humanities, 44% in The Natural Environment, and 47% in The Individual in Transition). Similarly, only 48% of those "strongly advised" to take developmental reading were able to attain a C or higher, compared with 59% in Humanities, 53% in The Natural Environment, and 65% in The Individual in Transition. The validity of the placement mechanism is parallel, moreover, on the highest range of cutoff scores: 64% of this group received a C or higher in Energy in the Natural Environment, as compared to 68% in Humanities, 65% in The Social Environment, and 73% in The Individual in Transition.

The implications of these data for College advisement seemed clear to the study subcommittee. Specifically, there appeared to be a direct connection between first-time-in-college students' ability to read, as measured by the reading portion of the CGP, and student success in the four core courses evaluated. The higher the reading score, the greater the probability of students' earning a C or higher in these four core courses. For example, of the 231 students who fell into the lowest range of placement scores, less than half (47%) performed successfully. Yet these students had managed to escape being

locked out of core courses, as prescribed by the ideal student flow model. To enable the College to enforce assessment placement, research might discover the loopholes in the system that permitted these exceptions.

Further, students scoring in the middle range who took core courses when "strongly advised" to complete a developmental reading course had the greatest probability of success in The Individual in Transition, the least in Energy in the Natural Environment. Also, those students scoring in the highest range had an almost equal probability of passing each of the four core courses (68% for Humanities, 65% for The Social Environment, 73% for The Individual in Transition, and 64% for Energy in the Natural Environment), yet only 8.6% enrolled in Energy in the Natural Environment. There was thus no academic reason for the highest-scoring students' low enrollment in that course. Academic advisors could have recommended enrollment interchangeably with the three other core courses for students with few or no reading deficiencies, since the core courses were designed as a unit to provide fundamental information about the world. Perhaps fewer sections of Energy in the Natural Environment were offered that term. Further study might determine why its enrollment was so much lower.

The Ideal Student Flow Model and Progress Through the General Education Program

A second major goal of the ideal student flow model has been to move diverse student populations smoothly through the three-tiered General Education system, once readiness for core courses has been established. By remedying deficiencies in developmental programs and learning solid academic content in core courses, students following the prescribed student flow model ideally develop academic skills sufficient to permit them to succeed in the more traditionally organized distribution and elective courses. These, in turn,

build upon the foundations of the core courses, providing basic information for a major and for work after graduation, either in occupations or at upper-level institutions.

Relationship of the student flow model to grades. Achieving passing grades in coursework specified by particular programs has traditionally been the means of measuring progress through the system and qualifying students for exit from the College. It is difficult, however, to draw firm conclusions about grades other than to note changes. Grades can improve because programs and instruction improve, students become better prepared, programs attract better-prepared students, or instructors grade leniently. Conversely, grades can decline because instruction and programs worsen, entering students have more deficiencies, programs become more difficult, or instructors grade more stringently.

On responses to an open-ended item on a questionnaire administered at the close of the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) in September 1984, some students indicated dissatisfaction with classroom instruction. However, 97% of the CLAST examinees and 95% of the 1983-84 graduates surveyed rated Miami-Dade as either a "good," or the "best," choice for a college. Students also overwhelmingly supported an open admissions policy at Miami-Dade, assistance provided by English as a second language (ESL) and developmental programs, and the educational directions of more control over the academic choices for students. The study subcommittee felt that orientation sessions, classroom visitations by supervisors, and student evaluations could strengthen instruction.

More objective data reported in Table 3, from a comparative examination of grade point averages (GPAs) for 117 Winter 1980 graduates and 115 Winter 1984 graduates, reveal some interesting differences.

Table 3 indicates that on every campus the percentages of graduates falling in the lowest range, or C average, increased from Winter 1980 to Winter 1984. It is tempting to credit this change to the educational reforms of the College and the emphasis on quality education, which do seem to have had an impact on grading practices. Grades at North and South campuses, in particular, seem to show stability at the top of the grading scale and increases at the bottom. Wolfson Campus and Medical Center, on the other hand, show almost double the percentages of students falling in the A and B grade ranges. Whether more A's and B's for these students indicated that they were better prepared because of the College's educational reforms is a significant question for further study.

Table 3

Frequencies in Four GPA Ranges for a 20% Sample of Winter 1980 and 1984 Graduates, by Campus and Percentages

	Ranges in Grade Point Averages							
	2.00-2.49		2.50-2.99		3.00-3.49		3.50-4.00	
Campus	1980 (%)	1984 (%)	1980 (%)	1984 (%)	1980 (%)	1984 (%)	1980 (%)	1984 (%)
South Campus	22	26	31	32	32	25	15	15
North Campus	14.9	29.6	28	23.9	38.3	28.2	18.7	18.3
Wolfson Campus	17.5	21	45	29	25	21	12.5	29
Medical Center	0	4	64	21	23	50	13	25

Student flow and the CLAST. A much more accurate means of measuring certain students' progress through the system than GPAs has become available. In the fall of 1982 the first state-mandated CLAST examinations were given in Florida. Passing the four CLAST subtests--reading, objective writing, essay writing, and computation--is now required for students to receive an Associate in Arts (A.A.) degree and gain junior standing in all state-supported universities in Florida. It has been argued that the CLAST subtests do not measure many of the skills and much of the basic information that the general education faculty wish students to learn. While this is true, the tests do measure student abilities in three basic areas--reading, composition, and computation--which are assessed by Miami-Dade at entry. Further, passing the CLAST is one prerequiste for graduation from the College for all A.A. candidates. Therefore examining data on the CLAST was an important task for the Student Flow Subcommittee.

In order to identify the relationship between GPAs and student success rate on the CLAST, a study was conducted by Institutional Research (Losak, 1984b). Of all 431 A.A. candidates who took the CLAST in 1983 and who had earned a B average or better (3.00-4.00), 20.4% failed one or more CLAST subtests. Seventy-eight failed the essay subtest; 26 the reading subtest; 3 the objective writing subtest; and 8 the computation subtest. It is important to point out that these data do not permit analysis on the basis of grades earned only in communications and mathematics, the areas most directly responsible for teaching language arts and computational skills. However, these skills, especially reading and writing, ideally are learned not only in English and mathematics courses, but also across the general education curriculum, and mathematics is explicitly required for Energy in the Natural Environment.

Grades in composition courses and passing the CLAST. To determine more

specifically the relationship between grades in composition and subsequent performance on the CLAST, IR conducted a study comparing grades in the Communications core course and in English Composition, the required distribution composition course which followed, for 1,501 students who took the CLAST in June 1984 (Belcher, 1984). The data shown in Table 4 reveal an orderly relationship between grades received in Communications and English Composition, and the proportions of students passing the language arts sections (reading, objective writing, and essay) of the CLAST. Consistent with the ideal student flow model, a greater proportion of students who earned A's and B's than those who received C's passed the language arts subsections of CLAST. The Student Flow Subcommittee concurred, however, that in the ideal student flow model, obtaining C's in English composition courses should indicate that students had obtained language arts skills necessary to pass the corresponding subtests on the CLAST. The actual student flow patterns are indicated by data reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Relationship Between Grades in Composition and Passing the Language Arts CLAST Subtests, by Campus

CLAST Subtests, by Campus	Grades in Communications A	B	B	D, F, or Withdrawal
North				
Percent passing Reading	77	55	36	23
Percent passing Writing	90	82	69	46
Percent passing Essay	79	77	60	23
South				
Percent passing Reading	93	83	62	55
Percent passing Writing	99	95	89	78
Percent passing Essay	94	85	70	69
Wolfson				
Percent passing Reading	83	45	44	25
Percent passing Writing	96	84	70	50
Percent passing Essay	100	59	56	25

CLAST Subtests, by Campus	Grades in English Composition A	B	C	D, F, or Withdrawal
North				
Percent passing Reading	80	50	45	38
Percent passing Writing	95	76	71	62
Percent passing Essay	87	74	55	53
South				
Percent passing Reading	94	82	65	56
Percent passing Writing	98	97	89	80
Percent passing Essay	97	86	69	64
Wolfson				
Percent passing Reading	73	67	45	31
Percent passing Writing	93	83	76	63
Percent passing Essay	90	77	61	38

Note. Medical Center Campus was excluded from this analysis because few students pursue the A.A. and therefore take CLAST.

Source: Belcher, 1984

Data in Table 4 reveal that A or B grades in composition courses were sometimes required in order for a realistic criterion of 75% to pass the language arts CLAST subtests. At North Campus, for instance, students needed to obtain an A in both composition courses to pass reading, a B in Communications and an A in English Composition to pass the essay, and at least a B in both courses to pass objective writing. In contrast, South Campus students needed a B in both composition courses for 75% to pass the reading and essay subtests. Surprisingly, students receiving any grade or no grade passed objective writing. On Wolfson Campus, students needed an A in both composition courses for 75% to pass reading, an A in Communications and a B in English Composition to pass the essay, and at least a B in Communications and a C in English Composition to pass objective writing. The Student Flow Subcommittee felt that the figures present significant implications concerning grade inflation and grading practices that convey an unrealistic sense of accomplishment for students.

Further subcommittee analysis of data from this IR report (Belcher, 1984) revealed the relationship between the number of composition courses taken and success on CLAST language arts subsections. A third required composition course, Advanced Composition, was added to the general education curriculum to increase the probability of students' passing the CLAST reading, writing, and essay subtests after their passing the three required general education composition courses. The data indicated that students with a greater number of composition courses predictably were more likely to pass each of the subtests.

However, breakdown of data by campus indicated some differences. On North Campus, examinees had to have taken two composition courses for the realistic criterion of 75% to pass reading. One or more courses was sufficient for 75% to pass the writing subtest. To have a 75% passing rate at the Wolfson Campus, students needed to have received A's in two composition courses to pass reading,

B's in two courses to pass the essay, and C's in two courses to pass writing. At least 75% of South Campus students receiving A's in Communications alone could pass all language arts CLAST subtests. At least 75% of those students at South Campus who made B's in Communications alone could pass the objective writing and essay subtests, and at least 75% receiving B's in two composition courses passed reading. At least 75% of South Campus students taking three composition classes and obtaining C's passed all language arts subtests. Again, the subcommittee felt that these data, indicating variations between the ideal student flow model and actual student flow patterns, had significant implications regarding grade inflation. Required collegewide exit competency examinations for Communications, English Composition, and Advanced Composition might make grading less inflationary and allow grading practices to more accurately reflect the acquisition of basic skills in reading and composition.

The subcommittee also examined the relationship between the terms when composition courses were taken and performance on the CLAST. It was hypothesized that students enrolling in composition courses shortly before taking the CLAST would have reviewed the verbal skills required to pass the CLAST and would therefore have higher passing rates on the CLAST than those students who had taken composition courses in previous terms. In most cases, however, this hypothesis did not prove valid. Many students scoring in the bottom quartile of the CGP entry assessment in reading and writing were taking English courses during the same year that they took the CLAST, and their CLAST scores lowered the passing rates for that year. It is not known whether these students had previously enrolled in developmental programs, or whether they had postponed taking composition courses because of their low entry scores. In any case, their numbers were sufficient to question whether any direct correlation could be made between CLAST performance and the term when composition courses

were taken.

To increase the probability of students' passing the language arts sections of the CLAST, each campus has instituted its own strategies. For example, North Campus uses prepared videotapes and other support materials to supplement the curriculum in composition classes. On South Campus, which has the highest enrollment of A.A. candidates, students can take preview CLAST tests with computer feedback and/or enroll in three three-hour preparatory sessions that include such topics as how to take tests, how to handle test anxiety, and how to deal with each of the language arts subtests. The subcommittee felt that these preparatory measures should be strengthened.

Mathematics courses and the CLAST. MGF 1113 was added to the general education curriculum to increase students' probability of passing the computational portion of the CLAST. An IR study correlated grades in General College Mathematics (MGF 1113) with the CLAST performances in June 1984 of 1,501 students (Belcher, 1984). The data (see Table 1 in the separate report annex for complete figures) indicated that students who had no grade in MGF 1113 were less likely to pass the CLAST computation subtest than those who had successfully completed MGF 1113. Also, for most students, the higher the grade in MGF 1113, the higher the percentage who passed the computation subtest. Moreover, the more recently the course had been taken, the higher the passing rate. Even those who had enrolled in MGF 1113 but not passed it with a C or higher had a slightly better chance of passing than students who had not enrolled. Data concerning North and South Campuses further revealed that students taking only MGF 1113 and receiving a C were as likely to pass the computational section of CLAST as those who had taken advanced mathematics courses in algebra, trigonometry, analytic geometry, or calculus. Students at Wolfson Campus, in contrast, did better on the computation subtest if they had

taken both MGF 1113 and advanced mathematics courses. Obviously, the CLAST examinees should take MGF 1113 just before taking the CLAST.

Developmental students and the CLAST. Data also indicated that students initially considered developmental can pass the CLAST (Losak, March, 1982). All students who earned a score comparable to or below the 65th percentile on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the American College Testing Program (ACT), and the Comparative Guidance Placement Test (CGP) were included in this study. Of 195 students initially ineligible to enroll directly in state universities, 50% passed all four CLAST subtests, and approximately 75% passed at least three subtests and could therefore transfer to state universities. In conclusion, "it is clear from this evidence that many students who arrive underprepared, defined by their inability to move directly into the State University System, have been adequately educated to the point of receiving an A.A. and passing all four of the CLAST examinations" (Losak, 1984).

The student flow model and the Standards of Academic Progress (SOAP). Under the categories of the SOAP system, which monitors student progress and imposes restrictions on students experiencing academic difficulty, as part of the College's commitment to impose reasonable expectations for student academic performance, a "clear" status means that satisfactory academic progress is being made, according to specific criteria such as GPAs and withdrawals. Data indicated that approximately 20% of all students show mixed records of being "clear" some terms and falling under the SOAP standards of academic warning, probation, suspension, or academic dismissal for other terms (Losak and Morris, 1982b). Thus the SOAP component of the student flow model has served as a valid assessment mechanism for early identification of those who need help, one of the goals of the College following the 1974 self-study.

SOAP standards have also been responsible for the relatively low numbers of

withdrawals from classes. The study subcommittee's comparative analysis of a 20% sample of transcripts from Winter 1980 and 1984 graduates showed a collegewide net decrease of 223 withdrawals from Winter 1980 to Winter 1984. However, the subcommittee agreed that in order to increase class retention, the College should more specifically determine why students withdraw from classes then establish procedures and/or programs to address this problem.

Further, SOAP's prescriptive categories allow ample time for students to solve academic difficulties. Of the 11,000 students suspended from the College over the past five years, approximately half have returned to Miami-Dade (McCabe, June 1982b). However, interviews conducted by the study subcommittee revealed that the appeal process was inconsistently applied on the four campuses. Therefore the subcommittee felt that all suspended and dismissed students should delay re-registration one major academic term or year without appeal.

The student flow model and curricula. The subcommittee's comparative analysis of a 20% sample of transcripts from Winter 1980 to 1984 graduates also revealed much shifting in course and program enrollment. Some changes, such as enrollment in mathematics and registration in a composition course within the first academic year, could be attributed directly to new general education requirements. However, one puzzling pattern was noted: a decrease in Communications enrollment during Winter 1980 (69%, compared to 57% in Winter 1984). A study should be conducted to discover whether this decline is due to assessment and entry placement--that is, whether the decline is the result of students' taking developmental studies prior to General Education requirements, in line with the educational reforms--or to other factors.

Similarly, since Miami-Dade has determined that the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) does not substitute for the learning experiences

afforded by the core courses, and since the state-mandated "Gordon Rule" requires students to write 24,000 words, the CLEP may not be used to satisfy core requirements. Logically, then, fewer students have been registering to take the CLEP. On the other hand, since the College encourages students to fulfill their educational goals by means of both external and internal programs, the study subcommittee concluded that other means of exemption for superior students should be explored.

The student flow model can also be credited with more stringent sequencing of courses for A.A. students—core, to distribution, to elective courses, in the three-tiered General Education system. According to the results of the student surveys administered by the Distribution Courses Subcommittee, students supported the concept of taking the core courses before distribution courses. The results were also consistent across different areas: 50% approved of sequencing in humanities, 56.4% in the social sciences, 55.04% in the natural sciences, and 68.21% in mathematics. However, many students wanted more options available in distribution areas—41.98% in humanities, 40.32% in the natural sciences, 44.92% in mathematics, and 48.93% in communications. Presently, a collegewide committee is exploring alternative courses for Advanced Composition, the third required general education composition course. Available data also indicated that allowing developmental students to take one elective course out of sequence but in an interest area, enhanced retention (Losak and Morris, 1982b).

The student flow model and programs. Another major goal of the ideal student model was to give students intelligent information about careers, as an aid in choosing degree objectives. Data in an IR report (Wright, 1983a) indicated that although there has been a decline in first-time-in-college students over the last five years, there has been a slight increase in the

proportion (from 57.9% to 60.3%) declaring the A.A. as their program objective. The proportion of A.S. students fluctuated from 15-20%, and there has been a decrease in occupational programs, both A.S. and planned certificate. What must be investigated is whether the student flow model is responsible for the decrease in completions in these programs. To counterbalance this trend, students should be informed about the transferability of many A.S. programs.

The data most significant for the student flow study, however, is the fact that fewer new students were "undecided" about their degree objectives. More direction toward course selection and degree objectives increases the applicability of the ideal student flow model.

The student flow model and advisement. The role of advisement is also central to retention. For example, those students who acquire marketable skills should be encouraged to complete degree or certificate requirements. Responses by CLAST examinees on an open-ended item of a questionnaire suggest that a complete evaluation of the advisement process should be made, and that faculty, administrators, staff, and students should become familiar with all aspects of the student flow model.

The future of the student flow model. To ensure that the flow model remains relevant to students, Miami-Dade should continue to evaluate programs to meet the needs of future learners. There should be stronger links with the business community, to canvass training needs, attitudes toward College graduates, and expected preparation and performance. Further, if the College could find a more effective method of tracking graduates' job placements, it could determine which immediate skills students need, when skills need to be upgraded, and what the College would need to do to attract more Dade County high school graduates and residents to the institution. Also, since the ideal flow model prescribes a smooth flow from exit to upper-level universities or to the

work force, the subcommittee concurred that one of the general education core courses should contain objectives concerning the expectations of the workplace and the value of the work ethic.

The Ideal Student Flow Model and Student Population

A last major study goal of the Student Flow Subcommittee was to examine possible ethnic needs hidden by examination of the data on other bases. Since the ideal student flow model was a reform designed to facilitate the academic progress of diverse student populations, the subcommittee reasoned that the data base should be analyzed not only by year, or such subcategories as campus, A.A. candidates, or first-time-in-college students, but also by ethnic distributions, to see if various populations have enrolled in different numbers, shown distinct patterns in entry skills, moved differently through the system, or graduated in different proportions than collegewide averages. Of course, comparisons among students in different ethnic categories are based on the assumption that the groups are homogeneous on relevant background variables. However, this may not be a sound assumption when examining academic outcome measures, since the groups may not be homogeneous in entry-level skills.

Racial distributions. Examination of a five-year profile of first- time-in-college Miami-Dade students from Fall 1978 to Fall 1982 (Wright, 1983a), and a two-year profile from Fall 1982 to Fall 1983 (Wright and Mannchen, 1984), revealed some shifts in student populations. Virtually no change occurred in the proportions of Asian or Pacific Islanders (1.6%) or American Indians (.2%) from Fall 1982 to Fall 1983. In contrast, in 1982, the White Non-Hispanic student population was 33.1% of the College but decreased to 31.4% in 1983. This decrease was partially offset by an increase in the numbers of Hispanic students, who represented 51.6% of the College in Fall 1983, compared

with 49.8% in 1982. Black non-Hispanic enrollments have fluctuated during the last five years, from a high of 19.1% collegewide in Fall 1980, to a low of 15.2% in Fall 1983.

Part- and full-time enrollment and average credit load. The proportional changes in ethnic distribution from Fall 1982 to Fall 1983 described above also caused some changes in part- and full-time enrollment, thus corresponding changes in average credit load. Black non-Hispanics showed slight drops in both part- and full-time enrollment. Meanwhile, White non-Hispanics had a large drop in full-time and a small drop in part-time enrollment. Hispanics, however, experienced a large drop in full-time and an extremely large rise in part-time enrollment. Since White non-Hispanics comprised 31.4% and Hispanics comprised 51.6 % of the total college enrollment, their proportions contributed to a 2.5% overall increase of part-time to full-time students (from 61.6% to 64.1% of the total college enrollment). Significant drops in full-time enrollment by Hispanics and White non-Hispanics also contributed to the collegewide decrease in average credit load from 9.04 hours to 8.90 hours from 1983 to 1984.

The subcommittee did not feel it had sufficient data to do other than conjecture on the impact of the general education reforms, in particular the student flow model, on the continued shift of students from full- to part-time status, with a corresponding decrease in average credit load. However, the subcommittee believed that the subject is important enough to warrant further study. The research instrument used should be specific enough to indicate to what extent the Standards of Academic Progress (SOAP), General Education requirements, basic skills requirements, or other aspects have influenced this shift from full-time to part-time status.

Retention Rates. An IR report which studied retention rates for full-time, first-time-in-college students (Losak and Morris, 1982b) indicated

that Hispanic students were more likely (64.6%) to have enrolled for three to four consecutive terms, compared to 53.1% for White non-Hispanics and 46.2% for Black non-Hispanics. Similarly, Hispanics had the largest re-enrollment rates (approximately 52%) of all ethnic categories.

However, since retention is an outcome measure which might be influenced by entry skills across ethnic groups, the data were further analyzed by placement scores on the Comparative Guidance and Placement (CGP) subtests in reading, writing, and computation. As expected, re-enrollment rates were higher for those scoring above placement cutoffs for developmental work on all three CGP subtests. Within this group, the re-enrollment rate was highest for Hispanics (72.2%), next highest for Black non-Hispanics (60.9%), and lowest for White non-Hispanics (55.5%).

In contrast, ethnic differences were not as apparent for the group of students deemed developmental because of placement scores. Re-enrollment was almost identical for White non-Hispanic and Black non-Hispanic students (43.2% and 44%, respectively). The re-enrollment rate for Hispanics was higher (54.6%), but the differences were not as great as for those above the placement cutoff scores.

Standards of Academic Progress (SOAP). An IR study (Losak and Morris, 1982b) indicated that Black non-Hispanic students scoring above placement cutoff scores were almost as likely (46.5%) as White non-Hispanics (56.2%) to have enrolled for three to four terms and remained "clear." By comparison, 73.3% of Hispanics attained this status. Similarly, for the group of students below the placement scores, the proportions of White non-Hispanics and Black non-Hispanics were almost identical (36.8% and 36.6%, respectively). Finally, it is important to note that although Black non-Hispanic and White non-Hispanic students showed comparable performances on the academic outcome measures examined, only 11.8% of

tested Black non-Hispanics were at the higher skill levels, compared to 53.2% of White non-Hispanics. Consequently, when these ethnic groups were compared without equating entry level-skills, the results showed poor performances for Black non-Hispanics. The subcommittee felt that a study on the impact of basic academic skills testing on minorities is thus clearly in order.

In 1981 and 1982, according to institutional research (Wright 1983b), 39.3% of suspended White non-Hispanic students returned to the College, compared with 44.1% of Black non-Hispanics, and 52.3% of Hispanics. Of suspended students, Hispanics had the highest percentage of completions, 12.8%, compared with 6.5% for suspended Black non-Hispanics and 9.55% for suspended White non-Hispanics who completed some type of College program. The subcommittee felt that the reasons for the consistently higher rates for Hispanics in all areas should be examined.

Success on CLAST. In 1983, institutional research (Wright, 1983b) indicated that 75.5% of White non-Hispanic students passed all CLAST subtests. The rate was increased in 1984 to 86.5% These figures are lower for both Hispanic and Black non-Hispanic students. Rates for passing all four subtests rose from 60.5% for Hispanics in 1983 to 75% in Fall 1984, and Black non-Hispanic scores rose from 42.7% in Fall 1983 to 53.7% in Fall 1984. The subcommittee concluded that dialect and second-language barriers may have affected these scores, as further study might show.

Graduation. A final category for ethnic/racial study was graduation rates. Marked differences among ethnic categories were apparent in institutional research data (Wright, 1983b). The proportions of White non-Hispanic and Hispanic graduates (18.8% and 19.4%, respectively) were more than twice that of Black non-Hispanics (7.6%). When the data were further analyzed by entry level placement scores, however, the graduation rate for those

more comparable to the White non-Hispanic graduate rate of 23%. However, the Hispanic graduate rate (29.8%) is much higher. Graduation rates for both White non-Hispanic and Hispanic developmental students are very low but nearly identical (5.3% and 5%, respectively). Once again, these two groups are graduating at more than double the percentage of Black non-Hispanics (2.3%). The study subcommittee thus concurred that more emphasis should be placed on the retention of low-achieving Black non-Hispanic students.

Summary of Results

In summary, the study's findings indicated that most students seemed to move according to the ideal student flow model. For example, readiness for, and probability of success in, core courses could be predicted and controlled with a high degree of validity by entry assessment and placement data. Also, as in many impact studies, it was often difficult to establish cause-effect relationships between the application of the student flow model and verifiable changes in the performances of students from Winter 1980 to Winter 1984. Causes of such phenomena are usually complex, so the study subcommittee felt that much more research should be done before major modifications in the student flow model are made. Particular areas of concern, where variations from the ideal student flow patterns have occurred, were correspondences between grades in composition and success rates on CLAST, effects of the student flow model on Black non-Hispanic students, and a decline in A.S. and certificate program enrollments and completions.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROJECTIONS

The following thirty-five recommendations, numbered consecutively, are grouped according to elements of the ideal student flow model: (1) entry basic skills assessment and placement, (2) progress through the system (including advisement, recruitment and enrollment in programs, retention, curricula, SOAP, and re-enrollment), and (3) exit assessment (CLAST) and graduation. Recommendations which pertain to more than one category have been located in the area of their greatest impact. The recommendations have also been arranged, within each major section, in order of importance and are accompanied by plans and projected timetables for implementation.

1. Entry Basic Skills Assessment and Placement

Recommendation 1. The College should continue to study the impact of required basic skills testing on minorities.

This recommendation relates to the study goal of determining the ability of minorities to move through the system. The Office of Institutional Research will continue to conduct research in this area in the future.

Recommendation 2. Students should take an orientation workshop prior to assessment.

This recommendation relates to the finding that students who are assessed sometimes do not register. The collegewide Student Services Committee will address this issue in Fall 1986 (1986-1).

Recommendation 3. The College should conduct a comprehensive evaluation of all student intake processes--recruitment, admissions, registration, placement, and orientation--to determine the effectiveness of these services.

The Student Services Committee will conduct the evaluation during the 1985-86 academic year.

Recommendation 4. In order to strengthen the College's intake process and retention rates, research should be conducted concerning students who apply for admission but are not assessed and do not register, who are tested but do not register, and who complete one semester but do not return.

The Office of Institutional Research will conduct studies in this area.

2. Progress Through the System

Recommendation 5. All new full- and part-time faculty should be required to attend a general orientation workshop, to be conducted by the appropriate designated area, in order to improve the quality of instruction and enhance the image of the College.

This recommendation relates to the write-in responses to an open-ended questionnaire administered to College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) examinees and 1982-84 College graduates describing a need to improve classroom instruction. The Academic Affairs Committee will address this issue during the 1985-86 academic year.

Recommendation 6. The College should strengthen its process of ascertaining why students withdraw from one or more courses, in order to strengthen, modify, or institute new programs that will encourage students to remain in school.

Implementation will take place during the 1986-87 academic year.

Recommendation 7. The College should study why Black non-Hispanic suspended students have a lower return and completion rate than other ethnic groups.

This recommendation is based on the finding by institutional research (Wright, 1983b) that only 6.5% of Black non-Hispanic students returning to Miami-Dade after being suspended completed some kind of program. The Office of Institutional Research will continue to conduct studies in this area.

Recommendation 8. The College should continue to re-evaluate and strengthen programs to increase retention rates of minority populations.

The Office of Institutional Research will continue to conduct studies in this area.

Recommendation 9. All degree-seeking students should be required to complete an orientation course explaining College processes, procedures, and services.

The Student Services Committee will address this recommendation during the 1986-87 academic year.

Recommendation 10. The College should conduct further studies on the progress of those students who fail basic skills tests but are allowed to take a non-developmental course in their interest areas.

Available data indicate that this practice enhances retention and prevents students from becoming completely disinterested due to taking only developmental courses. The Office of Institutional Research will continue to conduct studies in this area.

Recommendation 11. The College should continue to encourage students to utilize internal and external testing other than the College Level Examination Placement (CLEP) test as a means of meeting their educational goals.

The Academic Affairs Committee will recommend measures responsive to these needs in the 1985-86 academic year.

Recommendation 12. Based on interviews with College Student Services personnel, a new admissions code should be established to accommodate those non-degree-seeking students who wish to take courses, workshops, or seminars in areas of special interest.

Implementation of this recommendation will be facilitated by the Student Services Committee during the 1985-86 academic year.

Recommendation 13. The College should strengthen its recruitment program and develop new marketing strategies to increase the numbers of Dade County residents and high school graduates who attend the institution.

The Vice President for Public Affairs will address this recommendation during the 1985-86 academic year.

Recommendation 14. The College should strengthen programs to encourage students who acquire job-marketable skills to complete degree requirements.

The District Dean for Occupational Education will participate in this on-going effort.

Recommendation 15. The College should evaluate and revise the advisement process, in order to develop alternative and nontraditional methods for advising students. The objective should be to ensure that the advisement process contributes to the goal of increasing retention and graduation of students.

This recommendation is based on responses from CLAST examinees who were critical of advisement at the College. The Student Services Committee will outline the revisions in the 1986-87 academic year.

Recommendation 16. The College should continue to conduct studies to determine and evaluate the reasons why increasing numbers of students are in a part-time enrollment status. The studies should include such factors as the

Standards of Academic Progress (SOAP), general education requirements, basic academic skills assessment, or personal work schedule.

The Office of Institutional Research will conduct such studies in the 1986-87 academic year.

Recommendation 17. The College should study the reasons for the decline of Associate in Science enrollment and the corresponding increase in Associate in Arts enrollment.

This recommendation is based on the data concerning the decline in A.S. enrollment (Wright, 1983a). The Office of Institutional Research will conduct the study in the 1986-87 academic year.

Recommendation 18. The College should conduct a study to determine the numbers of students who return to Miami-Dade to meet prerequisites for admission into professional schools (e.g., engineering, nursing, or business).

The Office of Institutional Research will implement this study during the 1987-88 academic year.

Recommendation 19. The College should study why many Dade County high school graduates do not select Miami-Dade as their first choice when attending college.

The Office of Institutional Research will conduct a pertinent study in the 1987-88 academic year.

Recommendation 20. The College should study the development of short-term programs to accommodate students who would not enter college otherwise and are reluctant to pursue an associate degree program.

This recommendation relates to the collegewide decline in enrollment (Wright, 1983a). The Office of Institutional Research will conduct the study

during the 1986-87 academic year.

Recommendation 21. The College should establish a policy regarding the cancellation of classes. When a course is cancelled, an appropriate faculty member should meet the class to assist students in selecting another course within their majors.

Since student flow encompasses all areas related to retention, the Academic Affairs Committee will facilitate implementation of this recommendation in th 1986-87 academic year

Recommendation 22. The College should continue efforts to have the state change the definition of program enrollments and completions.

The Office of the President will address this recommendation by 1988.

Recommendation 23. Since all students who are suspended go through the Standards of Academic Progress (SOAP) categories of warning and probation, and because these categories give ample time to correct academic deficiencies, the College should establish procedures whereby suspended and dismissed students will be required to delay re-registration for one major academic term or year without appeal.

This recommendation is based upon interviews which indicated that the appeals process was inconsistently applied on different campuses.

Recommendation 24. The College should institute a policy of mandatory classroom visitations by appropriate supervisors in order to strengthen classroom instruction. This evaluation should apply to both part- and full-time instructional personnel.

This recommendation results from CLAST examinees' concern regarding the effectiveness of instructional faculty. The Academic Affairs Committee will

review the present policy by Fall 1986 (1986-1).

Recommendation 25. The College should institute a system of student evaluations to include both full- and part-time instructors.

The Academic Affairs Committee will review the existing policy and recommend changes by Winter 1987 (1986-2).

Recommendation 26. The College should develop a component emphasizing the expectations of the workplace and the value of the work ethic, within one of the general education core courses.

Since the ideal flow model prescribes a smooth transition for the graduate into the work force, the Academic Affairs Committee will facilitate implementation of this recommendation by Fall 1988 (1988-1).

3. Exit Skills Assessment (CLAST) and Graduation

Recommendation 27. The College should provide a stronger preparation component for students before CLAST is taken.

This recommendation is based on the College's commitment to student success on CLAST. A committee comprised of faculty from communications and mathematics will continue to conduct preparatory workshops until other strategies are shown to be more effective.

Recommendation 28. The College should continue to study the correlation of performance of Miami-Dade students on CLAST and performance at senior institutions, to determine whether the College is successfully preparing students for demands in senior institutions.

The Office of Institutional Research will continue to conduct studies in this area in the future.

Recommendation 29. Collegewide exit competency examinitions should be administered for the three required general education composition courses.

This recommendation is based on the contrast between the ideal flow pattern, in which C grades indicate the achievement of College exit competencies, and the actual flow pattern, in which achieving C's in composition courses did not assure that 75% of CLAST examinees pass the three language arts subtests--reading, objective writing, and essay. The Academic Affairs Committee will address this recommendation during the 1985-86 academic year.

Recommendation 30. The College should strengthen programs to increase graduation rates of minority populations.

This recommendation relates to the study goal of examining how minority students move through the system. Implementation of the recommendation will take place in Fall 1986 (1986-1).

Recommendation 31. The College should develop a more effective method of tracking job placements for graduates, especially for A.S., Planned Certificate, and Specialized Training Opportunity graduates.

The Office of Institiutional Research will continue to conduct studies in this area.

Recommendation 32. The College should seek to improve its method of studying the attitudes of employers toward Miami-Dade graduates and their performance skills and preparation for positions offered.

The Office of Institutional Research will continue to conduct studies in this area.

Recommendation 33. The College should continue to seek wide representation of employers on relevant advisory committees to ensure that all

training needs are identified.

Appropriate College personnel will continue efforts in this area.

Recommendation 34. The College should improve its procedure for informing students of the transferability of particular A.S. programs.

This recommendation is based on the finding that A.S. completions have declined (Morris and Baldwin, 1983). Implementation of this recommendation by appropriate personnel will take place in the 1986-87 academic year.

Recommendation 35. In order to continue to receive high approval from students in meeting their educational goals, Miami-Dade should re-evaluate programs on an on-going basis to meet the needs of future students.

All College programs and areas will continue to use existing review, evaluation, and revision procedures.

SUMMARY

The main purpose of the 1984 Miami-Dade Institutional Self-Study was to identify means for improving the educational effectiveness of the College. The General Education Program now in place has directly addressed major 1974 Institutional Self-Study observations and recommendations concerning general education. The program has attempted to make the rationale of general education more understandable to students. It has also sought to make general education more relevant, integrative, and interdisciplinary, (1) by creating a committee to study general education, devise models of core courses, and implement them over several years with the wide involvement of faculty, in-service training, use of new resources, and suggested strategies; (2) by establishing a collegewide distribution course list; (3) by devising an ideal student flow model unifying basic academic skills, the General Education Program, and computerized academic support systems; and (4) by involving faculty and students in the entire revision process. Further, the 1984 self-study endeavored to provide a comprehensive assessment of Miami-Dade's efforts to maintain an open admissions policy while successfully meeting the problems of radical changes in student populations, underprepared students, and demands for graduates with broad backgrounds and full competence in basic academic skills.

The Academic Policies and Curriculum Reform portion of the 1984 self-study has evaluated the General Education Program and the student flow through this program, and has found widespread approval from faculty, staff, administrators, students, and the community. To help ensure continued satisfaction with the General Education Program and the student flow model, the subcommittees of the Academic Policies and Curriculum Reform Committee recommend fine-tuning specific parts of the system rather than initiating major changes. In fact, all three subcommittees independently recommended not making significant changes in the

system without intensive study, review, and input from faculty and students. All subcommittees also recommended more orientation of appropriate faculty, staff, administrators, and students in regard to the system. However, areas that need to be thoroughly investigated, reviewed, and possibly modified include grade inflation, creating unrealistic student expectations, and core course objectives not being understood by the majority of students.

A second group of interrelated recommendations from the three subcommittee reports concerns continuing the educational directions the College has been following since the 1974 self-study. If Miami-Dade is to maintain both the open admissions policy and its search for excellence, it should also continue in the directions of its general education reforms--toward still more directive control over the general education curriculum and more emphasis on quality education, particularly in the area of basic academic skills.

A third major focus of study recommendations concerns establishing appropriate on-going task forces and committees to study, monitor, and advise the College on the General Education Program and the student flow model--in particular, the impact of new requirements, exit exams from composition courses, the role of the humanities and the Humanities core course in the General Education Program, the declines in program completions by Black non-Hispanics, and in enrollments in Associate in Science programs.

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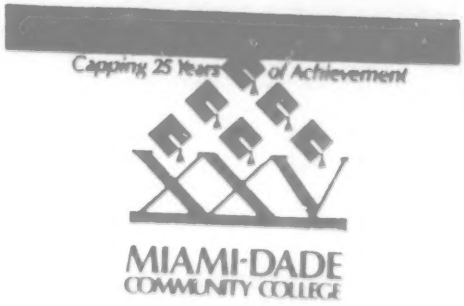

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